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A FRIENDLY

DIALOGUE,

ON THE

NATURE OF *DUTY.*

A FRIENDLY

DIALOGUE,

ON

BRITISH MUSEUM

NATURE AND DUTY.

A FRIENDLY

Spring (S.) D.D

DIALOGUE,

IN THREE PARTS,

BETWEEN

PHILALETHES & TOLETUS,

UPON THE

Nature of Duty.

CLEANSE FIRST THAT WHICH IS WITHIN.

Jesus Christ.

THE LORD LOOKETH ON THE HEART.

Jehovah.

NEWBURY-PORT:

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Toletus represents the Reverend David Tappan, as any one may see, by looking into his Sermon on these words, And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; but not with a perfect heart. *Mr. Tappan is therefore not answerable for any thing Toletus says, which is not protected by inverted commas. Philalethes represents the Reverend Samuel Spring, who humbly trusts the friendly Reader, whose mind is open to conviction, will not think his time lost, while he diligently compares, and carefully digests the opposite sentiments contained in the Dialogue: For truth is precious.*

PART I.

PHILALETHES. Good morning, Sir.

TOLETUS. Sir, Good morning.

Phil. It gives me pleaſure, when I reflect upon the deſign of this interview, to ſee you ſo early in the day.

Tol. The pleaſure, I truſt, is mutual; and as we meet like friends, ſo, I hope, we ſhall part, upon cloſing the buſineſs in view.

Phil. Is there any particular danger of the contrary?

Tol. I flatter myſelf there is not; but the appointed taſk of the day, you remember, is controverſy.

Phil. True, Sir, but is controverſy inconſiſtent with friendſhip? If ſo, it ought to be left off before it be meddled with.

Tol. No, Sir, I do not think it is, unleſs perſonal emulation ſupercedes a candid enquiry after light, and truth.

Phil. But, what has perſonal emulation to do, with an impartial enquiry after truth?

Tol. Nothing, Sir, at all: but you are not inſenſible that it has frequently attacked friendly en-

quiry, and wholly deſtroyed it: and what HAS been, may be again.

Phil. Very true, Sir, nor can we therefore be too much on our guard, to ſuppreſs every riſing feeling of the nature: and, I hope, the moment we loſe ſight of the truth, and begin to contend for victory, that ſilence will interpoſe, and end the diſpute.

Tol. I hope ſo, too; for what can be more diſhonorable, than for perſons to ſhut their eyes againſt the light of truth, while they ſolemnly profeſs to lie open to conviction, & involve themſelves in darkneſs by contending for the empty name of private honor?

Phil. Nothing, Sir, at all; and every inſtance of the nature, is a ſtanding reproach to chriſtianity.

Tol. True, Sir; let us therefore attempt to diveſt ourſelves of the ſpirit, and ſince Providence has caſt the lot of controverſy between us, attend to it like chriſtians.

Phil. I approve of the ſentiment, and hope my future conduct will be incapable of expoſing any preſent duplicity of heart.

Tol. I ſubſcribe the ſame moſt cordially, and deſire, if we muſt diſagree in judgment, that we may deſerve the honor of diſagreeing like friends.

Phil. No friendſhip, no diſpute, is then one of our leading maxims, and I hope you will mention the next.

Tol. Another important maxim, in diſputation, which now occurs, is this, that the Bible ſhould interpret itſelf, by a careful compariſon of one part

with another. For, unleſs we adduce ſcripture with deep reſpect to its pure connexion, we do but profanely add, "Thus ſaith the Lord," to authorize a favorite ſentiment of our own.

Phil. The maxim is good; and I hope the preſent controverſy will taſte of the fruit of it; for the ſacred text may never be perverted, nor touched with violent hands. But let me add another, that words ſhould be carefully uſed in a diſpute, according to the common acceptation, at the greateſt remove from all ambiguity and ſophiſtry; for, unleſs the plain and obvious meaning of language be preferred, a diſpute may laſt as long as one term can be ſhifted for another; and not only ſo, but ſurvive the honor of the diſputants, and any advantage to others.

Tol. The maxim is important, and deſerves a place at the head of this intricate controverſy; nor is your obſervation without weight. The preliminaries are then ſettled, and I hope they will be ſtrictly, and inviolably obſerved by us both.

Phil. I hope they will; for otherwiſe we ſhall injure our own characters, and the cauſe of truth beyond any reparation we are capable of making. But ſince the company is in ſuſpence and the morning paſſes, pleaſe to advance the propoſition you purpoſe to ſupport.

Tol. The propoſition which contains, a very important branch of divinity in my judgment, and unfolds the nature of the controverſy between us at once, is this,

"That perſons in a ſtate of unrenewed nature, may perform ſome things which are their duty, or which in ſome reſpects are truly right."

Phil. To diſpute with a friend is not the moſt grateful employment. But, ſince I have not a ſmall ſhare of confidence in your candour and generoſity, and we are MUTUALLY AGREED, that friends may ſtand upon the noble eminence of increaſing love, and remain the impartial ſpectators, of a regular conflict between each other's logic and ſentiments, I muſt proceed, and leave the event. You will therefore give me leave, as we have entered the liſts, to ſay, that the ground of my oppoſition to your ſentiment, is this, That the Bible irreſiſtibly proves, that all the moral exerciſes, and actions of unrenewed men, are wholly ſinful. I do not deny, that many of the actions of ſinners are naturally good: for, I am ſenſible, that wicked men frequently make profitable members of civil ſociety. They make uſeful huſbandmen, merchants, ſtateſmen and generals, and yet do nothing which is morally good; for, moral goodneſs is holineſs, as, I truſt, will be made to appear in the courſe of the converſation. But, ſince it is your province at preſent, to enumerate and ſupport your arguments, in favor of the propoſition you have advanced, and mine to examine, I will carefully attend, and treat them according to their merit.

Tol. "The principal arguments by which the truth of the doctrine is demonſtrated, and ſupported, are ſuch as theſe,

FIRST.

FIRST. The divine law reſpects the external acts of the will, or thoſe which are exerted in producing outward effects, as well as thoſe which are internal."

Phil. If this be your meaning, that the divine law requires the expreſſion of love to God and our neighbour, in external actions, I have no objection to the ſentiment. For, there is nothing more evident in the Bible. To be more explicit, God requires us to love the poor, and execute all the purpoſes of love in acts of charity, and kindneſs, as opportunity offers. And, ſo inſeparable is the connexion, between true love and the expreſſions of it, that the man who is poſſeſſed of a charitable heart, will have a charitable hand; and he who has a friendly heart, will ſhew himſelf friendly at all times. True love is born for adverſity as well as proſperity. To communicate happineſs by external actions, is as really the nature of ſincere love, as it is the nature of an unremitting ſpring, to overflow and ſupply the empty veſſels of the poor, and enliven the meadows of the rich, by every opening channel. To elucidate ſtill further, as there is never more fire than there is heat, nor more ſunſhine in a clear day than there is light; ſo there is never more true love at heart, than there is expreſſed in life and converſation. For, love is not an inactive, mortal principle, but full of life and kindneſs. It is ſtronger than death, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will ſpeak, and all the members of the body will readily perform their reſpective offices. This is the nature of love, and this the inſeparable connexion

between love, and the expreſſions of it. When God therefore requires the external acts of the will, as well as the internal, he only requires the performing, executive heart. He requires the expreſſive heart. But let me hear you explain yourſelf, for, if the diſpute be only about words, it is, already, time to drop it.

Tol. "The divine law requires, that the action itſelf be right, as well as the principles, motives and ends of it: for, there is a right and wrong in action, as well as in temper and principle."

Phil. This, Sir, points the difference between us at once; and I beg leave to demur: for when we view an action by itſelf, in diſtinction from the motive, and end of the agent in doing it, I queſtion whether there is any morality in it, any more than in the action of a falling weight, or any motion whatever. You may have an unutterable meaning aſſigned to your words, when you ſay the divine law requires that the action itſelf be right as well as the motives and ends of it, for ought I know; but ſince nothing is expreſſed which ſuppoſes you include the motive of the agent in ſome actions, I ſhall not derogate from the common uſe of words, while I look after the right and wrong of actions, in diſtinction from temper and motive.

FIRST. Let me query, is it not the plaineſt dictate of common ſenſe, and perfectly agreeable to uninterrupted experience, that moral agents never act, as ſuch, without ſome motive? The ſuppoſition is not admiſſible, that an intelligent agent can act without motive, any more than without thought. Who can

go into his field to labour, or into his closet to pray, without some motive or other? In short, if you should contend that a distracted agent could build his castles in the air, distinct from motive or end, I am not certain that I could digest the sentiment.

Secondly, On supposition a man can act in some instances without motive or end, it can never support your sentiment, 'till you prove the morality of actions distinct from the motive of the agent. But, is this possible? For instance, suppose a man should accidentally do his neighbour a kindness, who would think him the better? And, should he accidentally do him the greatest injury, who would think him the worse? To extend the matter further; tho' he should meditate the greatest kindness, and should yet do him the greatest injury, would not the will be taken for the deed? And, tho' like Joseph's brethren, he should intend the greatest evil, and should do him the most singular service, would he not be justly despised for his criminal intention? If these things be true, and I don't think any one will dispute them, it inevitably follows, that actions which are done without the motive of the agent, are not morally right any more than the shining of the sun; nor wrong, any more than a flash of lightning. But naturals, and morals must not be confounded, lest we unhappily attack the difference between virtue & vice.

Thirdly, I must use freedom to say, you involve another difficulty in your theory of moral action, without the motive or end of the agent. For, you treat of external acts of the will, in distinction from internal; and how there can be an external choice

without an internal motive, remains for you to prove, if you do not mean to venture your cauſe upon uncertain principles. But, how you can prove it is poſſible for a man to put forth an executive act of the will, without ſome internal motive or choice, I rather believe metaphyſicks themſelves cannot tell. For every act of the will implies choice, and choice implies preference, and preference motive. But to extend the thought now ſtarted; what juſt view have we of an executive act of the will, which is not as ſtrictly under the guidance of the heart, as the action is under the guidance of the executive act? We are mutually agreed, that it is the executive act of the will which produces the action. For inſtance, I write, and writing is an action, which depends upon my choice to write, which we both call the executive act of the will. It is that act of the will, which executes the preſent purpoſe of the heart. Since, therefore, it is as evident, that the executive act of the will, depends upon the heart, as that the action depends upon this voluntary executor, it follows, that the notion of an executive act of the will, ſeparate or diſtinct from motive, which you build much upon, is a groundleſs fallacious principle. There is not any ſuch act of the will, as you plead for, in diſtinction from motive, any more than there can be an action without the choice of the agent. If I may ſpeak with freedom, the truth is this, the heart, like a man who has an eſtate to diſpoſe of, makes a will, & appoints one voluntary executor after another to ſee it punctually executed. Hence I conclude, as the voluntary executor is the natural child of the heart, and the heart of the ſinner is wholly evil, that he does no part of

his duty in any of his actions, which are apparently conformed to the law of God.

Tol. But don't you ſee, Philalethes, that "The divine law, and every man's natural conſcience, enjoins and approves of ſome external actions, as in themſelves right, and forbids and condemns others, as in themſelves wrong and evil?"

Phil. No, Sir, whatever the matter is, I do not ſee any morality in any actions in themſelves conſidered, nor out of themſelves conſidered, diſtinct from the motive of the agent, any more than I ſee moral good in a reviving ſhower of rain, and moral evil in a deſtructive ſtorm of hail. And, as obſerved before, natural things, and moral, muſt not be blended. But, ſince you treat of the moral goodneſs of ſome external actions, in themſelves conſidered, and the moral evil of others, with ſo much freedom, as tho' the poſition were invincible, you muſt expect that I try the morality of them by themſelves conſidered, without incorporating any thing elſe. I will therefore put a caſe of trial, upon your principles: Suppoſe a man in all the rage of malice, ſhould throw a knife at his innocent neighbour, with a full deſign to take away his life, and ſhould only open an abſceſs, and ſave it. Would this malicious wretch do an action morally good? The caſe is not perplexed, becauſe it only preſents you with an action in itſelf conſidered. That, it is a kind providence to the man whoſe ſide is opened, and that deep

gratitude is due to God, who guided the point of the knife, none diſputes. But, has the intended murderer done well, in a moral view? If you ſay he has, common ſenſe will complain; and if you ſay he has not, your ſcheme of the morality of actions in themſelves conſidered, will complain, becauſe in one flagrant inſtance you deny it. But, it is equal to me which of the alternatives you prefer. For, I do not believe there is any moral goodneſs in actions done without motive, any more than there is moral goodneſs, in the moving wheels of a watch.

Tol. What you ſay, ſhall not eſcape my attention, at a proper time. But, pleaſe to remember "There is a diſtinct obligation lying upon us to perform EACH PART, of what God and conſcience, pronounce to be our duty, as well as a general obligation to perform the whole."

Phil. Very true, Sir: we are obliged to do all which God requires, be it more or leſs. But what does God require, is the queſtion, you remember? You ſay God requires the externals of religion, in a diſtinct ſenſe, if I underſtand you, and that the man who performs the externals of religion, without motive or end, ſo far does his duty. But God ſays, I commanded not your fathers, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and ſacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, ſaying, obey my voice. I wiſh I could arrive at your real meaning. For one would rather

rather conclude from the ſingular emphaſis you laid upon ſome particular words which were juſt ſpoken, that you ſuppoſe religion is a compoſition of ſeveral parts, and that a perſon does his duty or deviates from it, in proportion to his performing, or omitting the externals or appendages of it.

Tol. Very true, Sir, "And the guilt of any action is more or leſs enhanced, in proportion as it deviates from the rule of duty, in more or fewer reſpects."

Phil. But, does it follow, that becauſe love is the fulfilling of the law, and becauſe ſin is the tranſgreſſion of the law, that the tranſgreſſor is more or leſs guilty, in proportion as he deviates in externals? If you think it does, let the following illuſtration be attended to, in reference to external deficiency only. There was a certain gentleman, who called for his attendants, and directed them ſeverally, to wait upon three different debtors, and receive a ſum of money, and deliver it to him at ſuch a time. It appeared at firſt, that his commands were gratefully received. The firſt went and received the money, and returned at the time appointed; but inſtead of delivering it according to direction, locked it up in his trunk, and deceitfully informed the gentleman, that he was unfortunately robbed of it upon the road. Nor, did one falſehood only, ſerve his turn. The next received the money, and prodigal-like, ſpent it, in unlawful games, at the place of reception; but, returned at the time appointed, and told his maſter with a very

depreſſed countenance, that he accidentally loſt it croſſing the ferry. But, the laſt of the three conducted rather differently: for, as ſoon as he prepared himſelf for the journey, upon meeting an old acquaintance, ſpent his time in diverſion with him, 'till too late to perform his buſineſs, at the time appointed. Now, which of the three deviated from the rule of duty, in more or fewer reſpects? The firſt complied with every part of the command, externally, but one; he did every thing but delivering the money: He failed, but in one point only, and whether guilty of all, let conſcience judge. The ſecond complied with not ſo much of the command, as the other; for he left the money at the card table: and the laſt did nothing of any conſequence at all. Which therefore of the three, was the moſt faithful, and which the moſt unfaithful ſervant? For, upon the principle of external duty, each of them performed ſome parts of the command, and neither of them the whole of it. Let common ſenſe judge. If you ſay the illuſtration does not touch the caſe of external duty in hand, I beg leave to obſerve, that the failure does not lie in the ſimilitude, but in the deficiency of external duty itſelf; for it would touch ſome where, if external duty were a tangible quality. For, it is needleſs to inform you, that we have nothing to do with motives, or that part of religion which belongs to the heart, while we are reſtricted to that branch of it only, which conſiſts in externals by themſelves, ſeparate from every thing elſe. The queſ-

tion

tion therefore ſtill prevents us, which was the beſt and which the worſt ſervant?

Tol. I ſhall examine the matter at a proper time; but, at preſent, that my ſcheme may ſtand in its own light, let me add, "That the omiſſion of the external part of duty, is in itſelf ſinful, diſtinct from the want of right principles and ends."

Phil. You intend then at preſent, to give me an implicit anſwer to the queſtion, juſt ſtated relative to the ſervants. For if the omiſſion of the external part of duty, is in itſelf ſinful, diſtinct from the want of right principles, and ends; it follows, that the laſt of the ſervants was the moſt criminal, becauſe he omitted the moſt external duty. This, Sir, is the conſequence of your ſcheme: for, motives are not the things under conſideration, but externals without motives. But, can you ever convince common ſenſe, that the laſt of the three ſervants, was the moſt criminal? He was not a liar, nor thief, nor will any one attempt to prove, that he injured his maſter to as great a degree as either of the others. But, if you cannot prove, that the laſt was moſt unfaithful, becauſe his omiſſion of externals was the greateſt, the only alternative is to connect the motive of the agent, to determine the morality of actions, and of courſe to drop the matter of duty, in your ſenſe of the phraſe.

Tol. But, let us make haſt ſlowly, that we may be ſure of good ſpeed. I will therefore add, in con-

nexion with my other obſervations, that, " Tho' a perſon ſhould exerciſe a good principle, in neglecting any external action, which God has commanded, his neglect would be ſinful."

Phil. Not to neglect MY duty, in the exerciſe of a bad principle, let me interrogate a moment: Is it not diſobedience, to neglect what God has commanded? All the world will ſay, yes. Is not the exerciſe of a good principle, obedience to the divine command? YOU will not ſay, no. In what eaſier dreſs then, can I clothe the ſentiment, than this, that tho' a perſon ſhould be obedient to God, in diſobedience, his diſobedience would be ſinful. This might be called new divinity, if the phraſe were not odious. But not to indulge: It is readily granted, that a perſon may neglect duty from bad principle, and be very criminal; but to neglect it from good principle, and be criminal too, is a ſoleciſm indeed. The ſuppoſition cannot be admitted, that it is poſſible for a perſon, to neglect duty from good principle. For, all neglect of duty, originates from bad principle, and the particular cauſe, is diſcoverable upon proper attention. To illuſtrate the matter; ſuppoſe a real object of charity ſhould come into the room, and exhibit ſuch evidence of his need, as to convince you, it is your duty, to beſtow your charity; and not convince me that he is an object of charity. The caſe is clear, that you ought to give: and it is as clear that I ought not to give while I view him in

this

this light. For certainly, it is not duty to violate conſcience. But, perhaps you will ſay, my conſcience is erroneous. I grant it, ſo it is, as the caſe is ſtated: for the ſuppoſition makes him, a real object of charity to any one, whoſe conſcience is open to the evidence of the needy. But what ſhall I do, while under the influence of an erroneous conſcience? Certainly, if I act according to the beſt light I have, you will not condemn me; but, if I act in the face of conſcience, you will condemn me. While, therefore, I really think, he is not an object of charity, it is not my duty to give. But, ſtill you will ſay I am ſome how blameable, becauſe I neglect to help the needy: I grant it, I am blameable, but, not becauſe I act agreeably to my erroneous conſcience, but becauſe I have ſuch a conſcience, and have not taken due pains to aſcertain the marks of an object of charity. I am criminal, that I do not know one of Chriſt's poor, when I ſee him. Again, there is a certain traveller, who has been carefully directed, when he arrives at the parting of the way, to take the right hand and not the left; but, thro' inattention to his direction, he really thinks he was told to take the left hand, and not the right: now, what ſhall he do, when he arrives at the parting of the way? He was told to take the right, but he thinks he was not. What muſt he do upon the ſpot, for he is not under advantages to liſten to his inſtructions again? It is evident at firſt bluſh, as he thinks he was directed to take the left, that he muſt take it, if he moves at all. But he is going wrong, and is therefore blameable.

For

For what? Becauſe he did not properly attend to his direction, at the time it was given, and not becauſe he follows his beſt judgment, however erroneous. It cannot therefore be ſaid, that a man neglects his duty from principle, while he is under the guidance of an erroneous conſcience. For, as he would ſin greatly in violating the beſt light of preſent conſcience, he cannot neglect preſent duty, while he acts according to it. If any thing further be needful, to leave this matter in an eaſy light, let me aſk you whether you can blame yourſelf in not adopting my ſentiments, while you verily think they are wrong; or whether you can blame me in not adopting your's, while I really think they are inconſiſtent with the word of God? We cannot impeach each other in this reſpect, any more than we can the characters of Luther and Calvin, in not embracing the light of reformation, while they ſaw no light, but in Rome the mother of all darkneſs, and deluſion. Since, therefore, we cannot blame theſe noble reformers, becauſe they did not embrace the light of reformation, before they ſaw it; and cannot blame ourſelves, for acting according to the beſt light we have, without adopting this ſentiment, that duty ſometimes conſiſts in the violation of conſcience; it follows, that it is impoſſible a perſon ſhould ever neglect duty, from principle. But, let it be noted, that, tho' a perſon may do his duty, in acting according to an erroneous judgment, while it remains, that it is not his duty to retain it, when he has light to make an exchange. But, let me aſk, what improvment

ment you make of the doctrine, of neglecting duty, from principle?

Tol. The uſe I make of the ſentiment, is this, "If the omiſſion of actions commanded by God, be in itſelf ſinful, it neceſſarily follows, that the doing of them, is in itſelf right, and a duty."

Phil. Yes, Sir, if it be wrong to omit things which God has commanded, without motive, I grant, that the doing of them without motive, or end, is duty. But, as you have not proved the former, you cannot infer the latter.

Tol. It appears to me, that you miſrepreſent my ſentiment——

Phil. In what reſpect, Sir.

Tol. I am an advocate for the matter of duty, but have I any where implied, that it can take place, diſtinct from motive?

Phil. To clear myſelf of the charge, I will recall your own words, that you may in a recent manner repreſent yourſelf. You ſay "The divine law requires that the action itſelf be right, as well as the principles, motives and ends of it."——Now, Sir, if an action itſelf be right, as well as the motives of it, can it be juſtly ſaid, that I pervert your meaning or juſtle your words, when I conclude according to you, that the matter of duty is ſomething wholly diſtinct

diſtinct from motive? You have alſo ſaid "There is a right, and wrong in action, as well as in temper and principle:" and what can I ſuppoſe you mean, but this, that bare actions, in ſome inſtances, at leaſt, are of a moral nature? Not to pay ſtrict attention to your words, would be injurious; ſo long therefore, as I do, you cannot complain. Again, you have ſaid "The divine law enjoins, and approves of ſome external actions, as in themſelves right, and good, and forbids, and condemns others as in themſelves wrong, and evil." Now, Sir, ſince the only natural meaning of the phraſe, "External actions in themſelves," is this, external actions ſimply, in diſtinction from every thing elſe; what can I do, as long as I pay any ſort of reſpect to your words, but to treat of them by themſelves, without blending any thing elſe with them? And, if I cannot find any morality, in mere externals in themſelves conſidered, wholly diſtinct from motive, I hope you will impeach me tenderly, for the inability: For, I am determined, to give your words their full meaning, and latitude, let the diſpute terminate as it will.—— When you treat of externals as in themſelves conſidered, I will examine the morality of them, by the ſame rule: and when you treat of them by themſelves conſidered, and at the ſame time incorporate ſomething elſe with them, I will examine them by themſelves conſidered, in connection with the whole incorporation.

Tol. But, why do you dwell ſo long upon the affair, of external action in itſelf?

Phil.

Phil. For this reaſon; I ſuppoſe the ſecret of your miſtake lies, in taking it for granted, that there is morality where there is none. As it is the appearance of things, in other caſes, which often deceives; ſo, I ſuppoſe, it is the falſe glare of ſome external actions, which dazzles the eye at preſent. And, that moment we properly conſider, that actions are but ſigns, which may be eaſily counterfeited, and that words are but wind, which may be blown out of any mouth, we ſhall not call them moral.

Tol. But, pleaſe to attend, for, "When I ſpeak of the ſubſtance of a good action, or the matter of duty, as diſtinct from the manner, principle and end, I do not mean the mere motion of the body abſtracted from all exerciſes of the mind, but I intend the voluntary choice of the agent, to produce ſome external effect, required in the divine command."

Phil. I do attend, Sir, and am rather ſurprized at your inattention.

Tol. Pleaſe to give an inſtance of it.

Phil. If you will excuſe me, I will give a number of inſtances in the following queries. *Firſt*, Whether you do not infringe upon the liberty of the phraſe, "Externals in themſelves conſidered," by incorporating the voluntary choice of the agent, without the conſent of the republick of letters? For, if you had tried the ſtrength of language, to deſcribe mere ſimple externals, you could not have done it better,

than

than you have, when at the ſame time you inform me, that you include the voluntary choice of the agent. *Secondly*, Whether your method of treating things, is not calculated, to impoſe upon ſome perſons, who do not ſo fully underſtand the meaning of words, and leave them in the dark reſpecting the nature of duty? For, indulge me while I ſay, that no one can tell, from your method of blending things together, whether the duty you plead for, which is performable by unrenewed men, conſiſts in the diſpoſition of the agent, or in the bare action, or in both. If you think the duty you plead for, does not conſiſt in ſimple externals, what can you mean, by ſaying with ſo much freedom, that there is a right and wrong in action, as well as temper? And, if it be your judgment, that the matter of duty conſiſts wholly in the nature of the ſinner's will, who performs it, why cannot the ſentiment be plainly expreſſed? For, the truth will ſupport its own weight. Further, if you ſuppoſe the matter of duty does not conſiſt in mere externals, without the executive act of the agent, becauſe there can be no external actions, without voluntary agency; I muſt aſk again, what you mean by ſaying, that the divine law requires, that the action itſelf be right, as well as the motive and end of the agent? But, once more, if you only mean, that the external action is the expreſſion of the internal, you do but give up your whole ſcheme: and this I think your generous mind muſt prefer, as ſoon as you diveſt yourſelf, of early prejudices. For, if there be no morality in mere bodily motion, as you ſometimes

times freely ſay, you muſt ſee, that there is no moral right and wrong in the ſimplicity of actions, diſtinct from motive, and temper. Hence the concluſion will follow, that all the credit we can give externals, is this, that, they are only the expreſſions of the will, or heart. For, it muſt be labor in vain, to attempt to prove, that there is any difference, between a perſon's acting voluntarily, and acting from motive; becauſe they are preciſely the ſame thing. And, we do but loſe ourſelves with words, when we attempt the difference. For, a voluntary choice as neceſſarily implies motive, as it does a choſen object. And, 'till there can be a voluntary choice, without any thing choſen, there cannot be a voluntary choice without motive.

Tol. I diſcard the ſentiment, that there can be a voluntary choice without motive, or that the ſinner does the matter of duty without ſome motive.

Phil. I have heard you diſſavow the ſentiment before. Where then is the conſiſtency of ſaying, as you do, that the divine law requires that the action itſelf be right, as well as the motive, if the action cannot be performed without motive?

Tol. My ſentiment is this, that "The voluntary choice of the agent, to produce ſome external effect required in the divine command, is in its own nature a moral action, and is a duty in itſelf, abſtract from its attending circumſtances."

Phil. That the voluntary choice of the ſinner is a moral action, I grant, for moral applies to good and evil, both, as the term is commonly accepted. Hence we ſay, moral good and moral evil, in diſtinction from natural good and evil. But, that the voluntary choice of the ſinner, is a duty, you have not yet proved; nor is it poſſible, 'till you prove that ſome of his exerciſes are good, while the Bible plainly ſays, that, not only his heart, and thoughts, but every imagination of both, are only, and continually evil. Your ſentiment I think muſt labor in the view of inſpiration. For, the fond diſtinction between a natural man's acting in character, and out of character, is not made upon the divine pages. The ſcripture knows of no moral exerciſes, but holy and ſinful: and, it is to be wiſe above what is written, to think of a moral medium. But, to proceed; by the attending circumſtances of an action, it ſeems you mean manner, principle, motive and end; let me then aſk you, what duty there is in that choice which does not ſpring from a holy principle, is not governed by a holy motive, does not act in a holy manner, and is not directed to a holy end? If you can tell, to the ſatisfaction of a dying man under proper convictions, I will diſpute no more. For, that duty which has not a ſpark of holineſs in it, which does not unite the ſoul to Chriſt, nor leave it connected with eternal life, is not worth having, nor preaching to others. For, it will anſwer no valuable end at death, nor THE GREAT DAY.

Tol.

Tol. But, "To ſuppoſe there is no morality in ſuch acts of the will, ſeems to deſtroy all diſtinction of actions, and to make them all equally, and perfectly indifferent in themſelves, inſomuch, that the moſt attrocious pieces of conduct, ſuch as wilful lying, theft and murder, have upon this principle, no moral evil in their own nature, any more than their oppoſites."

Phil. You will give me leave to ſay, that, to prove a man may voluntarily chuſe to do his duty in ſome reſpects, without principle, motive or end, which you call the attending circumſtances of an action, you are chargeable with introducing a diſſimilar caſe. For, common ſenſe will never arraign a man, for wilful lying, who ignorantly ſpeaks that which is not true; nor, will it prepare a halter for him who innocently takes his neighbour's property, while he thinks it his own: and, certainly it will not deny military protection to the brave ſoldier, who undeſignedly kills his officer, inſtead of an eſcaping ARNOLD, whom he was ordered to purſue, Vi & armis. For, theſe executive acts of the will, which produce the appearance of lying, theft and murder, now alluded to, are not of a criminal nature. We muſt therefore confine lying, theft and murder, to the heart, as the civil law does. For, it is the motive of the agent, which denominates the nature of his actions. Before, therefore, you can prove, that a man may voluntarily do his duty in ſome reſpects without motive or end, becauſe wilful lying, theft and murder,

are criminal actions, in their own nature: you muſt STOP a moment and prove, that wilful lying, theft and murder, may be perpetrated without any bad motives, and intentions of heart. I will here juſt obſerve, for the ſake of plainneſs, and perſpicuity, that the executive acts of the will are but ſkin-deep things, in any caſe whatever, while we do not connect them with the heart. I have called them the executors of the heart; and, to know whether they are good executors, or bad ones, we muſt ſome how or other aſcertain the temper of the heart in their appointment. If the heart appoints them to perform the will of God, they are good; but, if the heart appoints them to fulfil its own private will, they are bad. But not to protract, let me only obſerve, that, tho' your unrenewed man can do his duty in ſome reſpects, without motive or end, he cannot be called a wilful lyar, thief and murderer, without the moſt criminal motives of heart; and why you make parallel caſes of them I cannot tell: for wilful iniquity is as full of motive as it is of itſelf. I might ſay the ſame of duty.

Tol. But, "To ſuppoſe there is no morality in ſuch acts of the will, ſeems to deſtroy all diſtinction of actions; nor can we determine whether they be virtuous or vicious, when we ſee them knowingly committed, unleſs we know what deſigns or views the agent had beyond that of the bare commiſſion."

Phil. If the ſoul were made only for the body; if there were no difference between ſpiritual good, and temporal;

temporal; if there were no good, nor evil for men, but what they experience in this life; if there were no future judgment, and examination of the heart; if God only required the outward appearance, and paid no reſpect to the heart; in one word, if holineſs only conſiſted in external obedience to the divine command, and ſin in the external violation of it; if theſe things were true, I could readily adopt the doctrine of material duty in diſtinction from motive, and at firſt ſight could tell the difference between a good action and a bad one, by the bare commiſſion. But, now I cannot; becauſe good and evil belong to the heart only, and actions often deceive.

But, ſince you rather ſuppoſe, the bare commiſſion of actions, will inform the ſpectator which are good, and bad in a moral view, I will put a caſe for the trial of your ſkill. The caſe is ſhort, and will be quickly reſolved.

Tol. Let us hear it, if you pleaſe.——

Phil. Which of the perſons, who came into the room ſince we have been ſitting here, is an honeſt man?

Tol. The queſtion is rather ſingular, I think, Sir.

Phil. But, I truſt, not wholly impertinent, as we ſhall perhaps ſee in the anſwer.

Tol. Surely, I cannot tell. For, all I know reſpecting them, is this, that about an hour ſince, the

firſt came in very decently, went to the deſk, and took out a number of pieces of gold—and about half an hour ſince, the other came in the ſame manner, unlocked the deſk, and took a number of ſilver, and left us with reſpect. But, what is your deſign?

Phil. This, Sir, to ſhew, that your ſcheme is not ſo full of eyes, as to tell an honeſt man from a rogue, by the bare commiſſion of actions. For, the one who came in firſt, and took out the gold, employed a ſecret key, and has not only ſtolen the money, but haſtily ſhipped himſelf on board a veſſel then moving from the wharf, and is gone to ſea.—The other came by the leave of the gentleman, and took out his own money, to diſcharge an honeſt debt.

Tol. Is it poſſible? I could not have thought it, from his appearance.

Phil. It is fact, Sir. For the gentleman juſt gave me the information, when he called me out, after looking into the deſk himſelf. The concluſion is therefore eaſy, that there are ſome actions at leaſt, ſo convertible to good and bad purpoſes, that the moſt eagle-eyed obſerver, cannot tell whether they be virtuous, or vicious, from the bare commiſſion.—The rule is very fallible indeed, when applied to diſtinct caſes, that the nature of an action can be determined from the bare commiſſion. For, actions are but appearances, and like fair faces and elegant dreſſes, they often deceive. They are not in their

nature

nature moral, for if ſo, they could not be counterfeited, but muſt remain fixed, and unchangeable, like SINAI'S LAW. Hence, it frequently happens, that the ſame actions are made uſe of, to effect the moſt oppoſite purpoſes according to the different diſpoſitions of the agents. While one kiſſes his maſter as a friend, another does it as a traitor. While the people of God appoint a faſt, to humble themſelves for ſin, and ſeek his mercy, Jezebel with artful ſolemnity will introduce another, to take away the life of Naboth, that her aſpiring lord might poſſeſs his vineyard. Since, therefore, a chriſtian but too often appears in a humble point of light, while his motives will not bear examination; and, ſince the ſinner, under the appearance of chriſtianity, will often contend with his Maker, it is evident, when we ſee an action done, we cannot tell whether it be good or bad, in a moral view, by the bare commiſſion. And, after the ſtricteſt attention we can pay to the general tenor of human actions, we have reaſon to fear, that the ſearching eye of the GREAT DAY, will unfold the latent infidelity of ſome, who now ſhine as the brighteſt chriſtians of the age.

Tol. But, what does all this prove, if true?

Phil. It proves there is no morality in external actions, and detects the falſity of your poſition, that the bare commiſſion of actions will determine their moral quality.

But

But perhaps you will ſay, that the actions of good, and bad men, when they reſpectively act in character, are ſo different, that the commiſſion will inform us which are good, and which are bad: if this be your meaning, you collect no ſtrength, except this, that a man does ſome duty, while he appears like a chriſtian, though he have the heart of a Judas. But, this I ſuppoſe, proves too much. For there is nothing more obvious, than that a wicked man may appear like a good one, and incur the divine diſpleaſure in conſequence of it.

But further, if this be your meaning, that the actions of good men, while they act in character, appear to be good, and are ſo, becauſe they directly tend to communicate general happineſs; it is extremely true: but, does not ſupport your cauſe any more, than to ſay the vegetation of the ſpring is good in itſelf, becauſe productive of great happineſs to the world. For, natural good and moral good, are not the ſame, as repeatedly obſerved, and muſt not be blended.

Tol. But, pleaſe to take the labouring oar a little while yourſelf.

Phil. I have no objection: and hope the helm will feel the advantage of a new Pilot: for I rather think, from the appearance of things, there is danger at hand.

Tol.

Tol. Perhaps not, for the wind is fair; and our first port is almoſt in ſight.

Phil. I will then object, that love is all that God requires; for love is the fulfilling of the law; but mere external action is not love, it is therefore not required, but only as the expreſſion of it.

Tol. "It is readily granted in anſwer to this objection, that love is in a ſenſe the ſum of true religion."

Phil. But, before you go any further; in what ſenſe is love the ſum of true religion, and in what ſenſe is it not?

Tol. "On the one hand, there can be no holy exerciſes without it, and on the other where this is, it radically contains, and effectually leads to the due performance of all other duties: and in this ſenſe, all the externals of religion may be ſaid to be comprehended in it, as they fundamentally ſubſiſt in it, and are the natural, and fit expreſſions of it."

Phil. But, Sir, let us not loſe ſight of truth, and play with words. For, if there be a ſenſe in which love is the ſum of religion, in what ſenſe is it not the ſum? and if there can be no holy exerciſes without love, what is that duty worth, but NOTHING as the Apoſtle ſays, which is deſtitute of love? Further, if love radically contains all other duties, what are other

other duties, deſtitute of love, but trees without roots? As you compare love to the roots of a tree, and externals to the limbs, and branches, I have a right to extend the metaphor, and ſay, that your external duties without love, are like trees without roots: or, as the Apoſtle has it, "Trees whoſe fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots." Let us alſo hear what Chriſt ſays, under the ſame metaphor, reſpecting duty without love. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me.—If a man abide not in me, he is caſt forth as a branch and is withered." What therefore you call duty, Chriſt calls a rejected, withered branch. And, you will give me leave to ſay, that duties without love, are always withered things before the Bible. But, you treat further, of a ſenſe in which the externals of religion may be ſaid to be comprehended in love, as they fundamentally ſubſiſt in it, and are the natural and fit expreſſions of it. And, will you alſo point the ſenſe in which they are not comprehended in it, and do not fundamentally ſubſiſt in it, and are different from the fit expreſſions of it? For, to ſay there is a ſenſe in which they are the natural and fit expreſſions of love, ſuppoſes there is another ſenſe in which they are not: and that other ſenſe is what you have to eſtabliſh, or leave the externals of religion according to their name, to be called the externals of religion, and not duties in themſelves conſidered. But, pray Sir, what are they, different from the motion of the body, the ſound of the voice, the

appearance

appearance of the eyes and the looks of the face, without love? If you will tell me, I ſhall be in your debt. Only draw the line between the externals of religion, and religion itſelf, and ſhew that they are any thing different from external ſigns or expreſſions, and you will reach your darling point, and I will give you honor. I therefore give you the laboring oar again; but if you can prove that love comprehends all religion, and that the externals of religion radically conſiſt in it, and are the natural expreſſions of it, in a certain ſenſe, and yet in a certain nameleſs ſenſe, are duties in themſelves conſidered, you will not meet with difficulty.

Tol. Let us then ſee what we can do; "For if there were no antecedent obligation to perform theſe external duties, abſtractly conſidered, they would not be natural and fit ways of expreſſing love, any more than their oppoſites; and conſequently, love would ſee no reaſon to prefer, nor would it lead to the choice and practice of the former, any more than of the latter."

Phil. What you now advance is plauſible in imagination, but not true in reality. For love is a nature, the eſſential property of which is to expreſs itſelf in the channel of external obedience to the divine command, juſt as it is the nature of the ſun to ſhine, and communicate light and heat. As it is the eſſential property of the ſun to ſhine, ſo it is of love to expreſs itſelf externally as God commands. That

definition therefore of love, which does not include the expreſſive nature of it in externals, is as eſſentially defective, as a definition of the ſun which does not include light. For expreſſive obedience is as much the property of love, as light is of the ſun. But, to ſupport what I ſay reſpecting the nature of love, by a ſcriptural alluſion; as the body without the ſpirit is dead, and not a man, ſo faith without works is dead. As there is no ſuch creature as man without a ſoul, ſo there is no ſuch thing as faith without works. As the former is but a natural corps, ſo the latter is but a ſpiritual corps. I think I have therefore a right to theſe concluſions; *Firſt*, that your reaſoning fails, upon this footing, that you attempt to ſeparate things which are inſeparable, and divide indiviſibles, by treating of external duty in diſtinction from love. For, both ſcripture and reaſon ſay there is no ſuch thing. It is only a piece of imagination to think of a good ruler, in diſtinction from good adminiſtrations, to think of a kind father, in diſtinction from his expreſſive love to his children; to think of a loving heart, ſeparate from amiable expreſſions: and it is beyond the power of reaſon to deſcribe theſe apart. For, the connexion is inſeparable. And, tho' we ſeem to ſpeak of them ſeparately, it is only in compliance with the ſucceſſion of our ideas. But, our ſucceſſive conceptions reſpecting things which are inſeparably connected, muſt not grow up into diſtinct doctrines. *Secondly*, I muſt take leave to ſay, you are by no means logical, in calling the externals of religion the matter of duty,

ty, becauſe they are in fact no more than the manner, or mode of the operations of love, juſt as it is of the ſun to ſhine, and the brook to run. The nature of love is to act in a lovely manner. Hence, *Thirdly*, The matter of duty in your ſenſe of the phraſe, is ſuperfluous divinity. It is wholly ſuperceded by the natural and inſeparable expreſſions of love. It is therefore as needleſs to a good man, as adding weights to gravitating bodies, in order to their tending to the centre, or going to the eaſt to ſee the ſun riſe, and to the weſt to ſee it ſet. To the wicked alſo the Bible ſays it is nothing, and why they ſhould be inſtructed differently, ſince they are apt enough to catch at ſtraws, and think themſelves to be ſomething when they are nothing, is not eaſy to ſee. For the beginning of deception, is not earlier than the beginning of danger.

Tol. But, will love prompt a man "To do an action, in which he ſees no prior, moral fitneſs?"

Phil. Love will act like itſelf and not like hatred. It will direct the eye to ſee the poor, and the hand to ſupply them. It will ſoften the tongue by the law of kindneſs: it will find a way to the cloſet, and furniſh the lips with acceptable words to addreſs its Maker. It is juſt as natural for a good man, under the influence of the new nature to do good, as it is for a bad man under the influence of the old nature, to do evil. And as there is no evil in a wicked man's actions, previous to his evil inclinations of heart, ſo, there is no

duty in a good man's actions, previous to holy inclinations of heart. And, to me there is nothing more fanciful and wild, than to talk of moral fitneſs in actions before they exiſt: for actions cannot take place before the executive act of the will, nor the executive act before an exerciſe of the heart. It hence follows, that your moral fitneſs of actions is ſo far from preceding love, that it is the conſequence of it, in the order of nature, to ſay the leaſt. If you ſay you do not mean, that the action does exiſt before the executive act, and that it is only a conſtituted fitneſs between love and the expreſſion of it, which is contemplated, it gives you no ſtrength. For, that it is the nature of love to obey God externally, and do good to man is what I plead for. I will alſo add, as there was no goodneſs in the firſt action of man before it was done, ſo there never has been the leaſt goodneſs in any actions before they were done ever ſince, nor will there be hereafter. Let us then not make a diſtinction between love and itſelf, and we ſhall meet with no difficulty.

Tol. I will attend to what you obſerve preſently: but, have you any thing further to offer upon this point?

Phil. Only this, if your ſentiment be juſt, that there is an antecedent moral fitneſs in ſome actions, which is the reaſon why love prefers them to their oppoſites; and that ſinners do their duty in performing them, it muſt follow, upon your principles, that

that the ſinner, as ſuch, is under obligations to perform all the expreſſions of chriſtian love. For inſtance, the chriſtian loves to go to the Lord's table becauſe he there diſcerns the Lord's body; it is therefore, the duty of the ſinner to go, without diſcerning the Lord's body, tho' he eat and drink judgment to himſelf. The chriſtian loves to ſay as Peter did, thou knoweſt that I love thee in a holy manner; and according to you, the ſinner muſt ſay the ſame. The chriſtian loves to ſay, I know him in whom I have believed; the ſinner muſt ſay the ſame, with a falſe and lying tongue. The chriſtian loves in proper company to relate the ſaving work of God upon his ſoul; the ſinner muſt do the ſame. The chriſtian loves to ſay upon a death bed that he is ready to die; ſo the ſinner muſt ſay upon your principles. This, Sir, is the complexion of your doctrine. But is it ſcriptural? Is it divine? You will diſown the conſequence, I ſuppoſe, becauſe it is glaring. But, if you do, I hope you will diſown the premiſes too. For, if chriſtians chuſe the things I have mentioned becauſe there is an antecedent moral fitneſs in them, and it is the duty of the ſinner, as ſuch, to perform the matter of duty in one inſtance, why ſhall he not perform the matter of duty in all inſtances? Where ſhall he ſtop? Have you told me? No, Sir, you have not. Nor is it poſſible on your principles, unleſs there is a poſſibility of his carrying the matter of duty to extremes, ſo as to become the matter of ſin. You have only this ſhift to make, I think, to eaſe the difficulty; that the ſinner may not do any thing

without ſincerity; but I ſay the ſame. Let us then tell him to cleanſe firſt that which is within; let us tell him as Chriſt does, to make clean the inſide, that the outſide may be clean alſo, without any inſincerity of heart. For externals without the heart are not duties. They are but counterfeits without love. As the celebrated Doctor Blair, Profeſſor at the Univerſity of Edinburgh, has it, "They are the inſtituted ſigns of devotion; the language in which it naturally expreſſes itſelf. But let us remember, they are ſigns and expreſſions only: and we all know, that in various caſes theſe may not correſpond to the thing ſignified. It is in the diſpoſition of the heart, not in the motion of the lips, or in the poſture of the body, that devotion conſiſts. The heart may pray or praiſe, where no words are uttered."

I will only add, that tho' there may be the appearance of religion where there is none, there cannot be any religion without the appearance of it, any more than there can be love without a beloved object. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh. Let us therefore not conclude that the words of the wiſe are pure words, when they proceed from the mouth of a fool. "For excellent ſpeech becometh not a fool."

Tol. I beg leave to differ with you; for, if the externals of religion are no more than the ſigns and expreſſions of love, "It will follow that nothing is required of the unregenerate which they can do, while ſuch."

Phil.

Phil. There is no neceſſity of ſaying it will follow; for I frankly aſſert it. And, I ſay that there is nothing required of ſinners before repentance, or which they can do while impenitent, becauſe Chriſt ſays, Cleanſe firſt that which is within, that the outſide may be clean alſo. Now, if Chriſt tells the ſinner to do the inſide work the firſt, who ſhall invert the order of his direction, and tell him to do the outſide firſt. Further, if the holy ſpirit directs us to eat and drink, and do every thing to the glory of God, who can ſay with a quiet conſcience while he attends, that it is the duty of ſinners to do ſome things while in an impenitent ſtate, which no one will ſay can be done to the glory of God? For, to do an action to the glory of God, is holineſs. Only, Sir, remember that the point is fixed, that every thing muſt he done to the glory of God, and you will not find any thing which ſinners are directed to do while they remain impenitent. For, a man cannot be directed to do every thing whatſoever which he does as a chriſtian, or to the glory of God, and at the ſame time be directed to do ſome thing elſe as an impenitent, which cannot be done to the glory of God. It therefore follows, that the Bible has no directions for the ſinner which he can comply with while he remains an impenitent. I feel ſafe in what I ſay, becauſe the word of God is my SHIELD, AND DEFENCE.

Tol. From hence then, "It will follow, that it is abſolutely unlawful, and wicked for a man while unregenerate, to pay his juſt debts, to ſpeak the truth,

to do acts of juſtice and mercy, or to do any external action whatever."

Phil. It is readily granted, Sir, that it is unlawful and wicked, for the ſinner to do any thing whatever not to the glory of God, becauſe in doing it he would break God's command. I make my appeal to ſcripture, and not to the partial feelings of human nature. For, I prefer an argument which comes home to the thing, to that which is addreſſed to very partial judges, of right and wrong. God has commanded the ſinner to do every thing with a penitent humble heart, to his glory; and if he have not ſuch a heart, he will but break the divine command, let him do what he may. If he pays a juſt debt to his neighbour, he will rob God in the payment; if he ſpeak the truth with his mouth, and ſay there is a God, he does but lie, for at heart he ſays there is none: it is no better than ſaying the Lord liveth, and ſwearing falſely: if he prays and makes a ſacrifice with his lips, it is nothing but abomination to the Lord: and if he plows he will ſin, as the Bible ſays. For, the Lord looketh on the heart: and the day of judgment will examine the heart. It is nothing, therefore, but the falſe gilt, and momentary glare of externals, which lead one to think there is any duty in them, ſeparate from the heart: and if we properly remember, when we ſee the ſinner performing an action, that he may be called before the bar of God to anſwer for it, before he has time to do another, we ſhall not perhaps feel ſo attached to externals,

ternals, becauſe they will anſwer no end at the needful moment, without love.

Tol. If "It is abſolutely unlawful and wicked for a man to pay his juſt debts, to ſpeak the truth, and do acts of juſtice and mercy, he is bound in duty to refrain from them; for certainly it is our duty to refrain from that which is wholly ſinful."

Phil. It is not our duty to refrain from thoſe things which God has commanded: but, it is our duty to refrain from ſin. Hence it is the duty of ſinners to refrain from plowing in an impenitent ſtate, becauſe the plowing of the wicked is ſin; ſo it is their duty to refrain from praying in an impenitent ſtate, becauſe the ſacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord. It therefore follows, that it is the duty of the ſinner, to refrain from doing any thing more in an impenitent ſtate. For, as hinted before, he is commanded to do every thing in a holy manner, to the glory of God.

Tol. But do you not beg the queſtion, in ſuppoſing that all the actions of ſinners are ſinful?

Phil. No, Sir, I do not. For Chriſt ſays, he that is not with me, is againſt me. Chriſt never adopted the ſoft diſtinction, between a ſinner's acting in character, and out of character. For if he had, we ſhould probably find ſomething of this import; The ſinner who acts out of character, is with me; but, he who acts in character, is againſt me. But ſince the

the Bible is so silent respecting the better sort of sinners, whose enmity at times lies so dormant, and quiet, as not to interfere with the matter of duty, that it makes no difference between them and their fellows, in point of obedience I cannot at present adopt the moderate distinction; I shall therefore conclude, that sinners never do any part of their duty in any of their actions, and not only so, but that all their moral actions are full of sin: and consequently, that they may never be directed to do any thing, but in a holy manner, to the glory of God. For, the sinner labours under no inability to repent of sin, and love Christ, which can justify a direction to any thing short of love. The true state of the case is this, the sinner is under obligations to love God immediately. He may not therefore pay his just debts, speak the truth, nor do any thing else whatever in an impenitent state: nor may he omit any one of the divine commands; and consequently he must commence a penitent. He may not take the right hand, because that is sin under the appearance of RELIGION; nor may he take the left, because that is sin under its OWN appearance: but he must take the strait, and a narrow way of repentance, and faith which leads directly forward to the new Jerusalem. This, and this only, is the path of duty. The Bible knows of no other.

Tol. But can he repent?——

Phil. If he cannot, why is he commanded, and what is the design of the invitations, motives and commands of the gospel? *Tol.*

Tol. "These commands are designed to excite sinners to seek that grace which may enable them to a saving compliance: and, not to put them upon a vain, and hopeless effort to believe of themselves, independently of special grace."———

Phil. I understand you, Sir, in part: but let me comprehend you fully. What is the primary intention of directing sinners to use means?

Tol. "The primary intention of such directions is, that they should attend them in the best manner they are able, antecedently to true faith, and holiness; as is evident to common sense."

Phil. I understand you fully: but, I rather think, saving your pardon, that it is not the most evident to common sense, that your doctrine is consistent with the sense of the gospel. For, if the directions of the gospel primarily intend, that sinners should use means in the best manner they are able, antecedently to holiness, it is not the immediate duty of sinners to repent. For, if there be a gospel direction to something which is antecedent to repentance, it necessarily postpones the duty of repentance, and does not admit of its being an immediate duty. It hence follows upon your principles, that it is not the duty of sinners to repent and believe, 'till after conversion. The antecedent duty of seeking the grace of compliance, will for ever go before the compliance itself. But let us solemnly attend: Is this the

the language of the goſpel? Or, is it pleading the ſinner's guilty cauſe againſt God, his Maker? Did Chriſt call upon ſinners to get ready to comply with his command, to come to the ſupper, or did he call upon them to come becauſe all things were ready? Did he direct them to attend the goſpel feaſt in the beſt manner they were able antecedently to repentance, or did he tell them to come directly in a holy manner? If he told them to do as well as they could before repentance, why was the poor helpleſs man bound hand and foot and caſt into endleſs darkneſs, who went without the wedding garment? Your ſcheme ſhocks my inmoſt ſoul, when I think of it. For, it contradicts the very ſpirit of goſpel directions, and does not oblige the ſinner to repent immediately and come to Chriſt, any more than to perform natural impoſſibilities.

Tol. But, does not Chriſt ſay, no man can come to me, except the Father which hath ſent me, draw him?

Phil. Yes, Sir: but, what is the difficulty? Would the ſinner come to Chriſt if he could, and cannot, or can he come if he will, and wickedly refuſes? If the awakened ſinner has a diſpoſition to come to Chriſt, and has not natural ſtrength, he is no more blameable for not coming, than the child is becauſe he cannot take up a great rock, and carry it from the bottom of the valley, to the top of the mountain. But, if the ſinner has natural ſtrength to repent,

pent, and come to Chriſt, then he is blameable in not believing, juſt as the criminal ſervant is, who cannot feel diſpoſed to confeſs his fault. It is often ſaid, an inability is an inability, and no matter whether it be called natural or moral, if divine power muſt remove it. But, do thoſe who talk in this manner, conſider what they ſay? The child cannot put the rock upon the top of the mountain: but, is he blameable? The ſervant cannot confeſs his fault while he remains obſtinate; and is he not blameable? Surely, God muſt be a hard maſter indeed, and the ſlothful ſervant will get his caſe, if he commands the ſinner to repent immediately, and he cannot, in the ſenſe a little child is not able to carry a rock, to the top of a high mountain. But, if the ſinner has every talent neceſſary to repentance, and has no diſpoſition, then he is blameable, and God is not a hard maſter. The difference therefore between natural inability and moral does alter the caſe. For, the cannot which conſiſts in a diſinclination to perform a reaſonable command is wholly criminal: but, the cannot which conſiſts in the want of natural ſtrength, is wholly excuſable. The conſequence is then plain, that all thoſe who ſay they cannot repent, do nothing leſs at heart, than charge God with laying them under the moſt unreaſonable command. And, as to the tendency of your doctrine, when you ſay "The primary intention of ſuch directions is, that they ſhould attend them in the beſt manner they are able, antecedently to true faith and holineſs," let others judge on the principles of common ſenſe, to which you make your appeal.

THE complexion of things in this connexion, if we are candid, discovers a principal hinge of the controversy. For, if the sinner is possessed of every talent necessary to immediate repentance, then it follows, the first thing which God requires of him is true repentance; but if he be not possessed of every talent necessary to immediate repentance, it is not his duty to repent 'till he is; and consequently, that God is a hard master, according to the sinner's plea, in requiring it. But, this none will dare say openly. Further, what sincerity is there in the gospel-offer, if the sinner cannot accept of it any more than the child can carry an immoveable rock? For, if an offer be made to the needy under impossible circumstances, it is rather an imposition than any thing else. What should we think of a physician, upon directing a patient wholly deprived of the use of his limbs, to rise up and walk home with him, and his difficulty should be removed? Should we think him wise? And, may we suppose, that Christ offers salvation without money and without price, to those who have not a natural ability to accept of it? No: Christ offers salvation to sinners, because they may accept of it if they please. And since the sinner is as capable of accepting it immediately without the drawings of the Father, as the christian is of continuing to accept of it without the grace of the Son, what reason can be given, that the sinner should not be directed to come to Christ immediately, any more than that the christian should not be directed to continue in his love? For they are equally dependent. The

christian

christian will go no further in the path of duty except God gives him a heart, and the sinner will not begin a holy life without God gives HIM a heart. But, neither of them labour under any natural inability. Let us therefore not illustrate the sinner's case, by a poor child's who is left thousands in debt, by a profligate father, and cannot make the payment: but, rather let his case be represented by a dishoneſt debtor, who has borrowed a number of talents of gold, and cannot pay them when called upon, because he loves to accumulate his own private intereſt at the expence of his creditor. The fact is this, the fall has made man dishoneſt. This is his only inability. He has received a number of talents from God, and he does not love to improve them for him; but, loves to rob him of his soul and body, and all he poſſeſſes.

Tol. So then let it reſt: but before we dine, let me juſt obſerve that it will follow from your ſentiments, "That a man ought to have a preponderating evidence, that he is in a regenerate ſtate in order to his warrantably doing any external action whatever; for if he doubteth, he is damned."

Phil. The text you refer to means ſomething, no doubt: but why you introduce it in this connexion unleſs you beg the queſtion, that duty does in ſome meaſure conſiſt in externals; and that the ſinner need not doubt when he attends to the externals of religion without motive or end, whether he is doing

his duty, I cannot tell. But this you have not proved. You muſt not therefore conclude, the ſentiments I have advanced in oppoſition to you are wrong, becauſe they make it our duty, to do every thing with an eye ſo ſingle, as to ſee that it is done to the glory of God. Whether you expect it or not, I readily grant that we have no more right to perform nor omit any thing without evidence of love to God, than we have to go to the table of the Lord, without diſcerning the Lord's body. For we are as abſolutely bound to do one thing to the glory of God as another. It therefore follows, if you cannot prove, in the face of the Apoſtle, that it is duty to go to the holy ſupper without diſcerning the Lord's body by the eye of faith, and that a man may examine himſelf as he is directed, without knowing that he has any holy exerciſes of heart—and that he has a divine warrant to do ſome things without a view to the divine glory, while he is abſolutely commanded to do every thing to the glory of God——nay, if you cannot prove that the divine commands are inconſiſtent with each other, it follows, that a man may not do any thing without comfortable evidence that he is a friend to God. But this you will ſay cuts us all to the quick. I grant it, and ſo does every other truth the moment we examine it properly. Let us then be perfect as our Father is perfect, and the difficulty vaniſhes at once. But, pray Sir, before you renew the objection, relieve your own ſcheme. For, may not a man as eaſily know, that he is governed by holy exerciſes when he is about to perform an action,

as to know that he is not governed by sinful ones. For, on your principles, the sinful heart must be so fast asleep, as not to interrupt or spoil the matter of duty, lest it become the matter of sin. If, therefore, you do not mean to say, that it is no matter whether a man does the matter of duty or sin, he cannot warrantably do an action without he knows his temper; for he that doubteth is damned.

Tol. So be it, if the difficulty belongs to me: but let us dine with love and friendship, for the servant calls.———

Phil. With all my heart, Sir; but when shall we re-assume the conversation?

Tol. At three o'clock, if agreeable to the company.———

Phil. Silence gives consent: please to lead the way, Sir.

PART. II.

Tol. THE clock ſtrikes three: and I thank you Gentlemen for your punctuality.

Phil. It is beautiful: and makes me think of one of my old maſter's maxims, "That a man without rules is a man without time."

Tol. An excellent maxim indeed: I therefore conclude he was a Methodiſt.

Phil. He was a Methodiſt in point of improving his time.

Tol. What were his thealogical ſentiments?

Phil. He was rather a moderate Calviniſt, I think, Sir.

Tol. Moderation is good: but, was he an advocate for the matter of duty in my ſenſe of the phraſe?

Phil. Yes, Sir, I think he was: and in that reſpect he failed, aſking your pardon.

Tol. But this calls up the diſpute again.

Phil.

Phil. I am ſenſible of it: and wiſh it were happily ended.

Tol. We are mutually agreed: let us "Therefore proceed to a SECOND ARGUMENT, which is as follows: It ſeems to be generally allowed, that God encourages men to attend the means of grace while unregenerate, that he has let them know either by the declarations of his word, or by fact and experience, that this is the moſt likely way to eſcape the greateſt evil and obtain the greateſt good——yea, that this is not only the moſt likely, but the ONLY likely way to obtain regeneration, and ſalvation. Now, if God has given ſuch ſtrong ground of encouragement to ſinners to attend upon means; it neceſſarily follows, that ſuch an attention is not in itſelf ſinful, but right, and their duty."

Phil. That the whole courſe of Providence connects the probability of the ſinner's ſalvation with his attention to the ſolemn things of the Bible and eternity, I have no diſpoſition to diſpute. For, I believe it to be a truth: I alſo fully believe, that ſinners are more likely to be ſaved when they are the moſt attentive, and the leaſt likely when they are the leaſt attentive. And, I heartily wiſh we might ſee thouſands, and thouſands of ſuch attentive ſinners, where we now ſee but here and there one. For, it would preſent us with a gracious proſpect of a harveſt of ſouls. It is therefore the duty of the children of God, to pray for the conviction of ſin-

ners, as well as their converſion; for, if we do not ſee the former, it is not likely we ſhall the latter. But, though the attention of ſinners to the things of eternity, makes it more probable that they will be ſaved, yet it by no means follows, that ſinners do any part of their duty in an impenitent ſtate. For, the probability of ſinners obtaining a crop in time of harveſt, depends wholly upon their plowing and ſowing. But, the plowing of the wicked we know is ſin. Since, therefore, the probability of ſinners reaping, in conſequence of plowing and tilling, does not ſanctify their labor, ſo the probability of the ſalvation of ſinners in conſequence of their attention to the means of grace, does not make their attention a duty: and, that for this plain reaſon, the Providences of God are not the obedient exerciſes of the ſinner; but different things.

You will probably ſay to evade the argument, that the plowing of the wicked is only ſinful when they plow in a wicked manner. To this, I anſwer, they will always plow in a wicked manner, 'till they have holy hearts. For, I have proved that it is the nature of the agent's heart which gives a character to his actions. But, granting that the tilling of the wicked is ſin only when they till their land with the baſeſt exerciſes of heart, yet we muſt remember, that the probability of reaping in this caſe is as great as in any other. It cannot then be proved, that ſinners do any part of their duty in attending to the means of grace, becauſe their attention originates the probability

bability of their ſalvation. The doctrine of probability will not help you. For, it does not always depend upon duty.

Tol. This concluſion then "Will inevitably follow, that God encourages men to exerciſe the moſt wicked enmity and hypocriſy, as the means of obtaining the greateſt good."

Phil. Perhaps not, Sir, for God no more encourages natural men to ſin in their attention to the Bible and the ſervices of his houſe, than he encourages men to plow with ſinful hearts, or than he encouraged the Jews to ſtain their hands in the blood of his Son, when at the ſame time he told them, that without his death no man could be ſaved. Chriſt's doctrine was this, that offences muſt come, or the work of redemption ceaſe. But, woe to him by whom they come, was his doctrine alſo. Now, were not the offences of Judas and others connected with the croſs of Chriſt? Did not both the probability, and the poſſibility of ſalvation depend upon that moſt horrid of all events? And, was the woe denounced againſt ſin an encouragement to it? If the wickedneſs of the Jews was the occaſion of the greateſt good——and the endleſs perdition with which the offenders were threatened, was not an encouragement to the offence, then your objection has no weight more than any thing elſe you can think of. But, all the chriſtian world know that the death of Chriſt is the only dawn of hope: and that everlaſting

everlasting destruction is not a motive to sin—The probability, therefore, of the sinner's salvation in consequence of his attention to the means of grace, is no argument that his attention is a duty: for, duty proceeds from the heart, and the heart of the sinner is wholly depraved. When therefore you remember, the probability of the sinner's salvation in consequence of his attention, does not depend upon his growing any better in the sight of God, because he always resists the Holy Ghost, and is at heart like his father the devil, your argument will escape. You will therefore give me leave to say, that your doctrine, and method to support it, rather lead me to suspect, that you have not just views of the total depravity of human nature, as stated in the scripture. And, since we move on in the dark respecting the KEY of the controversy, 'till we ascertain the nature and degree of the depravity of the human heart, I will thank you for your sentiments.

Tol. "To this, I answer: far be it from me to deny, or in the least to detract from the total depravity of man, as stated in the scriptures."

Phil. You express yourself safely, and orthordoxly; but, who will not say the same, that professes to be indebted to the Bible for his creed? But in what does this corruption of human nature consist?

Tol. "It consists strictly in the loss, or absence of that principle of true holiness which it originally possessed.

poſſeſſed. The preciſe notion of man's depravity, is the loſs or privation of the ſupernatural principles of holineſs. Our natural principles are not ſimply and poſitively evil in themſelves conſidered; but are corrupt, becauſe they have no principle of divine love to govern them; in themſelves conſidered, they are innocent, neceſſary and uſeful.

Phil. My fears then were not wholly groundleſs: for, this deſcription of depravity, as I humbly conceive, does not correſpond with ſcripture. You ſay, "It conſiſts, ſtrictly ſpeaking, if I underſtand you, in the loſs, or privation of true holineſs. You add further, "Our natural principles are not poſitively evil, but are corrupt, becauſe they have no principle of divine love to govern them." But, is the deſcription full? Holineſs is abſent, it is true, and no longer the lovely reſident of man's heart! But, has nothing elſe taken place? Does the houſe ſtill remain empty for holineſs to return, and preſide over innocent principles without any oppoſition? If human depravity conſiſts only in the abſence of holineſs, what is the ground of that conflict in the breaſt of man, upon the return of holineſs, which not only laſts, but riſes higher and higher, 'till death is ſwallowed up in victory? Can all this oppoſition be made by the feeble ſtrength of innocent principles, left without holineſs? This cannot be; for the oppoſition is not only made at the return of holineſs, but after it enters, and takes poſſeſſion of the heart again. Surely, if there had been a perfect agreement between the natural principles of human nature,

ture, and holineſs before the apoſtacy, and no other inhabitant has taken poſſeſſion, who can account for the diſagreement upon the return of holineſs to the vacant heart again? For, when a veſſel is emptied of pure water it will remain in the ſame purified ſtate, fit to receive the like again, if no defilement intervenes; ſo, when a houſe is emptied of its inhabitants, it will remain empty ſtill, to receive the ſame again, if others in the mean time do not take poſſeſſion. And, in the ſame manner if the human heart has ſuſtained no other loſs than the abſence of holineſs, and has not received a different inhabitant, it is impoſſible that there ſhould be a neceſſity for the renewing operations of almighty power to open the door of the heart, and give holineſs the poſſeſſion. But, that the all-creative power of God, which turns the ſhadow of death into the morning, and gives life to the dead, gives divine life alſo to the elect, cannot be denied, without making the Bible bluſh at firſt ſight. The conſequence is then eaſy, that the depravity of man does not conſiſt in the mere abſence of holineſs, but in a real nature which is poſitively oppoſed to holineſs. In ſhort, we may as wiſely treat of the depravity of an empty glaſs, or cup, as the depravity of man, if we make it conſiſt, ſtrictly ſpeaking, in the mere abſence or privation of holineſs. Sin is not a mere negative quality, but a poſitive one. Sin is directly oppoſed to holineſs: and, as holineſs conſiſts in loving God, ſin conſiſts in hating God. And hence, as Preſident Edwards obſerves

ſerves upon the ſubject of man's poſitive ſinfulneſs; "Natural men are God's enemies. Their wills are contrary to his will. They are enemies to God in their affections. Every faculty, and principle of action, is wholly under the dominion of enmity againſt God. There is not one affection, nor one deſire, but contains in it enmity againſt God. A natural man is as full of enmity againſt God, as any viper is of poiſon. This enmity againſt God has the abſolute poſſeſſion of the man. A natural man has a heart like the heart of a d[illegible]. Natural men are mortal enemies to God. They are enemies to the being of God. They have that enmity in their hearts which ſtrikes at the life of God, and therefore would kill him if they could. Their enmity to God cannot lie ſtill: but, they are exceeding active in it. The divine nature being immortal, there is no other trial poſſible, whether the enmity that is naturally in the heart againſt God be mortal, but only for God to take on him the human nature, ſo as to come within man's reach, that they ſhould be capable of killing him. There can be no other experiment but this. And this trial there has been. And what has been the event? They hated him, and perſecuted him, and embrued their hands in his blood. All cry out, crucify him, crucify him. Away with him. There can be no worſe principle, than a principle of hatred to God. The devils in hell cannot do any thing from a worſe principle than this." Thus far that great & good man, tho' dead, yet ſpeaketh. But not to call any

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man father, nor neglect the Bible; let us attend to the nature of man's depravity, as ſtated by unerring wiſdom.

Firſt. The ſcriptures no where give us the leaſt evidence to conclude, that the depravity of man conſiſts in the mere abſence of holineſs. The abſence or privation of holineſs, is not the language of inſpiration; but rather of human invention.———

Secondly. The ſcripture explicitly ſays the contrary. "For, the carnal mind is enmity againſt God. And God ſaw that the wickedneſs of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Further, we read, that "The heart of the ſons of men is full of evil, and madneſs;" and that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. Chriſt does not accuſe the Jews merely becauſe they did not love him; but, becauſe they abſolutely hated him; accordingly he ſays, "He that hateth me hateth my Father alſo. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had ſin; but now have they both ſeen, and hated me and my Father. They hated me without a cauſe." Theſe texts, and I may ſafely add, the whole current of ſcripture ſhews us, that ſin is not a negative nothing, but a poſitive, criminal ſomething. It is a nature which the mere abſence of holineſs will not conſtitute.

Thirdly, The natural heart is not only poſitively ſinful in diſtinction from its being deſtitute of holineſs; but

but it is totally ſinful : and, the totality of no one thing whatever can be expreſſed by words, if the Bible does not irreſiſtibly prove, that the heart of the ſinner is totally wicked. For, it not only ſays the *heart* of man is evil, and that the *thoughts* of the heart are evil : but it adds, that the *imagination* of the thoughts, and not only ſo, but *every imagination* of the thoughts of the heart is *evil*, and *only* evil, and *evil continually*. We are alſo told that the corruption of human nature is total in the following words " The heart of the ſons of men is full of evil and madneſs." And to finiſh the deſcription of total corruption, or that all the moral exerciſes of human nature are ſinful, when the Apoſtle is treating of all mankind in a natural ſtate, he adopts this moſt ſtriking language ; " Their throat is an open ſepulchre; with their tongues they have uſed deceit ; the poiſon of aſps is under their lips : whoſe mouth is full of curſing, and bitterneſs. Their feet are ſwift to ſhed blood. Deſtruction and miſery are in their ways ; and the way of peace, they have not known : there is no fear of God before their eyes." But

Fourthly, While the pen of inſpiration gives us this ſad picture of the human heart, it carefully informs us in diſtinction from Doctor Taylor, and ſome of the moderate men, that the picture is taken from the life of human nature, and anſwers to all the unrenewed race without exception. " For we have before proved ſays the Apoſtle, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under ſin. There is none that

ſeeketh after God—they are all gone out of the way.—There is none that doeth good, no not one." Upon this follows the hateful picture preſented juſt now: and, if antecedents and conſequents have any connexion with each other as they drop from the pen of inſpiration, there is no more moral goodneſs belonging to one natural man, than another. Therefore *Fifthly*, I need not add for information, that the notion of a ſinner's acting out of character, and conſequently doing his duty in ſome reſpects externally, is but a notion without any relation to common ſenſe or the Bible. For, his character as given by the Holy Ghoſt, is not only ſinful, but totally ſinful, and conſtantly ſo. All his moral abilities are oppoſed to God, and they are never at reſt. For, the wicked are like the troubled ſea, when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt. There is no peace ſaith my God to the wicked.

Tol. What you have obſerved reſpecting the total and unremitting enmity of the ſinner ſhall be noted. But "Since true grace far from extinguiſhing, rectifies and regulates theſe principles of nature, we may aſſuredly conclude that they are in themſelves not ſinful, and conſequently that actions produced by them are not evil, conſidered merely as proceeding from theſe ſources."

Phil. I grant it Sir, that actions which originate from innocent principles are not evil. But, as I have ſufficiently proved from ſcripture, that the wicked

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are not poſſeſſed of any moral principles which are innocent, what you ſay is without any weight. For principles which are not moral are incapable of, moral good and evil both. If your ſentiments be juſt, ſinners are not ſinful at all. For innocent principles are not ſinful ones, and cannot produce ſin more than any thing elſe. As is the fountain ſo will be the ſtream. If the fountain be innocence, the ſtream cannot be offence.

Tol. But, have I not ſaid "That all the principles of human nature are corrupted?

Phil. Yes, Sir, and that the corruption of human nature "Conſiſts ſtrictly ſpeaking, in the loſs or abſence of that principle of true holineſs, which it originally poſſeſſed."——and to crown the whole you have ſaid "Our natural principles are not ſimply and poſitively evil, but in themſelves conſidered are innocent." Where then is ſinful depravity? For the abſence of holineſs will not account for it: nor will innocent principles account for it. Your definition therefore of depravity, is ſo lame, that between the abſence of holineſs, and the innocence of natural principles it falls to the ground. It does not appear to be ſcriptural. For, the Bible treats of the corruption of man as a diſtinct nature. It is a nature which is as directly oppoſed to the nature of holineſs, as a bitter quality is to a ſweet one. And if there be any difficulty in accounting for the exiſtence of it, your good ſenſe muſt tell you, that it lies as much in your way as mine. The fact is this,

as the holy nature left the human heart, the ſinful nature took poſſeſſion: and, hence all the mental and corporeal faculties of man are under the dominion of ſin. The capacious mind which was made to be improved in the moſt noble contemplations, and the body which was deſigned for a temple of the Holy Ghoſt, are given up to the ſervice of God's great enemy. Accordingly Chriſt ſays "Ye are of your father the devil, and the luſts of your father ye will do." This, Sir, is the nature of the human heart, as ſtated in the word of God. The conſequence is then plain, that 'till the heart be changed, man will do no part of his duty. His moral nature is as totally depraved as the devil's, and he acts from no higher principles and does no more duty——For the branch is like the tree, tho' not ſo great, and is already fit without any change or alteration, to be caſt into the fire.

Tol. A THIRD ARGUMENT is this, "Many of the exerciſes of unregenerate perſons, under the goſpel are the effects of a divine influence upon their minds—— whenever men under the goſpel, attend its external duties in a ſerious engaged manner, they are inwardly moved to it by the ſpirit of God. It is he, who aſſiſts and ſtirs them up in ſuch caſes to read, hear, and pray. Depraved nature left to itſelf would never lead to theſe exerciſes, they are therefore to be aſcribed to grace. We may therefore certainly conclude that ſuch exerciſes are not in themſelves ſinful, but right."

Tol.

Phil. The ſtrivings of the ſpirit are right, I make no doubt: for all that God does is right. But, that ſinners ever make a right improvement of the ſtrivings of the ſpirit, or the convictions of conſcience, I utterly deny. For, the heart that is totally oppoſed to the grace of God will not make any improvement whatever of the means of grace. The ſpirit of inſpiration, therefore, ſays to ſinners, Ye do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt." You have no right to conclude that any of the exerciſes of ſinners are right in a moral view, 'till you prove that man is ſo little depraved by nature, that he is diſpoſed to comply with his duty: but, this you cannot from the Bible, any more than you can prove that darkneſs is light, or that ſin is holineſs.

Tol. But have I not ſaid that "Depraved nature left to itſelf would never lead to theſe exerciſes—they are therefore to be aſcribed to grace."

Phil. Yes, Sir, you have: but you have not proved that the ſinner's heart is morally capable of duty. You therefore only take the thing for granted, which remains to be proved, while you conclude that ſinners do any part of their duty. For every imagination of the human heart is evil, and always evil: and where you will find another ſeat of moral exerciſes, but the heart I cannot tell. But, ſince the heart is totally evil, you muſt find ſome ſound place in human nature, between the ſole of the foot and the crown of the head, which has not been ſo injured

by the fall, that it is morally incapable of conformity to the law, or you cannot prove that ſinners do any part of their duty. Where then is this ſound ſpot, which has eſcaped the total ruin of the apoſtacy? Tell you muſt, or patiently ſee your building fall. But, perhaps you will ſay the heart is a general indefinite term which ſometimes means one thing, and ſometimes another, and conſequently that nothing of importance in the preſent queſtion, can be ſafely concluded from it. Things of this nature I have heard. But, no reply is neceſſary, except this, that infinite wiſdom, uſes the term heart in a moſt obvious, and determinate ſignification. God ſays, my ſon give me thy heart. With the heart man believeth—Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth ſpeaketh—That a good man, out of the good treaſure of the heart, bringeth forth good things, and an evil man, evil things—Thus Chriſt alſo addreſſed a number of his followers who got bewildered with appearances: "Are ye ſo without underſtanding alſo? Do ye not perceive, that whatſoever thing from without, entereth into a man, it cannot defile him, becauſe it entereth not into his heart: and that which cometh out of the man, that defileth: for from within, out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, &c.——Now, Sir, ſince God has no reſpect to appearances, but looketh on the heart to determine the nature of actions: ſince he ſays that good and evil both proceed from the heart, and mentions no other ſource of moral exerciſes, it follows, that the ſinner whoſe heart is totally averſe from

from God, does no part of his duty while under the painful exercises of conviction, any more than the convinced reprobates will do their duty at the bar of God. The sinner, Felix-like, will always tremble when God shews him his danger: and at heart says, go thy way. So the devil believes and trembles upon the same principle; and one therefore does as much duty as the other. I oppose your argument upon this principle, that the sinner's heart is in a state of constant enmity to God: and consequently, that his painful convictions of conscience, and all his attention and cries, under the work of the law, differ nothing in their nature from the exercises of the reprobates at the left hand of the Judge, at the Great Day. If we ask for the cause of the reprobate's conviction and cries, at the bar of God, the answer is easy, he will then read his character and doom, in the book of truth, which will unfold all his sins. This also is the same book, which the sinner has a glance of under present convictions: but, instead of improving, he wholly misimproves it. He hears God speak; but will not obey. He hears Christ knocking at the door of his heart: but bolts, and bars it against him by impenitence and unbelief. Sinners will not let Christ in. They will not give him their hearts. Hence he says, Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Only, Sir, attend to these truths, that, the heart of the sinner is the same now that it will be at the bar of God; that the sparks of conviction which now only appear will then rise to burning flames; and, that his present uneasiness will then

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be raiſed to the moſt doleful, piercing cries; and that God will not then call theſe exerciſes any thing better than ſolemn mockery, and you will not call them the matter of duty now. This is the nature of the ſinner's exerciſes under the operations of the law; and tho' theſe exerciſes are occaſioned in conſequence of the ſtrivings of the ſpirit, yet the ſinner only is guilty.

Tol. No, Sir, for if they are not materially good, the conſequence is this, "That the holy ſpirit in exciting them, is the author of ſin."

Phil. I am glad you did not ſay, that it follows, the Holy Spirit is a ſinner. For, God is no more the author of ſin in opening the ſinner's mind, and ſhewing him his duty, tho' this be the occaſion of his increaſed wickedneſs, than the maſter is the author of the ſervant's obſtinacy, in conſequence of reaſoning with him upon the nature of his duty. The fact is this, the ſinner will oppoſe his duty as often as he ſees it, and the more he ſees it, the more he will oppoſe it. Hence the Jews who were favored with the inſtructions of Chriſt, made themſelves more wicked than the Sodomites: and hence goſpel ſinners, in conſequence of the ſhining light which they enjoy, are more criminal than the heathens: It is therefore, ſo far from truth, that ſinners under convictions do any part of their duty by their attention, that if they ſhould die without a change of nature, their deſtruction would be more intolerable in proportion to the

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light rejected. For, he that knoweth his maſter's will, and doeth it not, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes. But let me hear your next argument.

Tol. "A FOURTH ARGUMENT in proof of the doctrine which is near akin to the preceding, is this, The holy ſpirit is the great convincer of ſin: hence, if there was nothing right; nothing but ſin in the beſt exerciſes and doings of the unregenerate, we may conclude the holy ſpirit would always convince men of this, whenever it operated on their minds in a way of conviction and humiliation.——But is this the caſe with awakened convinced ſinners? Surely no: fact and experience loudly proclaim the contrary."

Phil. The preſent argument which claims ſuch relation to the former, in a word, is this, That there is ſome duty in unregenerate performances, becauſe the holy ſpirit does not convince men there is none. But, have you a right to aſſert this from experience? If you think you have, upon reflection, I beg leave to ſay that your experience differs from ſome others. For David Brainerd, and St. Paul, preſent us with a different relation of experiences. Before Paul was converted, he thought much of appearances. But, after he met with a ſaving change, we find his views were different. For he ſays that every thing ſhort of love is NOTHING. Now, may we ſuppoſe that a man of the Apoſtle's abilities, and heart, did not repent of doing thoſe things which he emphatically calls NOTHING? But, aſide from his experience as a great

great and good man, he ſpake under the guidance of the holy ſpirit. Further, he tells us of two kinds of ſorrow, godly ſorrow and the ſorrow of the world. The former, he ſays, worketh repentance to ſalvation, not to be repented of: but the latter worketh death. It therefore follows, as there is not a third kind of moral ſorrow, that if you cannot prove the ſorrow of a ſinner under conviction is real, godly ſorrow which worketh repentance unto ſalvation, that it muſt be repented of, becauſe it worketh death; and conſequently, that it is not duty, but is ſin. I alſo infer further, that if the ſorrow of the ſinner under conviction, which you will grant is one of his beſt exerciſes, muſt be repented of, that there is nothing he does but calls for repentance: and conſequently that he never does any part of his duty in any thing whatever. To apply the matter, will he not repent that he has ſaid, Lord, Lord, when he has had no heart to do the things which God has commanded—will he not repent, that he has called God Father, when he has made the devil his father—will he not repent, that he has prayed with a prayerleſs temper——that he has aſked favors of God in a wavering, faithleſs temper of heart——that he has gone to the table of the Lord, under a ſolemn profeſſion of diſcerning the Lord's body, when the light in him has been nothing but darkneſs——will he not repent, that he has ſpent ſo much time in plowing like a wicked man, which is ſin? Will he, can he do otherwiſe than repent of all thoſe performances which have left him unconnected with Chriſt? The experience

ence of Mr. Brainerd, which I referred to, you will find in the firſt part of his life. It was not only ſeaſonably committed to paper; but frequently reviewed in after life, as all will grant: and not only ſo, but prepared for the preſs by his own hand, under Mr. Edwards' eye, at the cloſe of a holy, devout life. The account is therefore as genuine as any thing of the nature can be, which is not found upon divine pages. Permit me to ſay it is the teſtimony of one who excelled the excellent themſelves, in point of acquaintance with the heart, and near communion with God, as all will grant who read his life with a gracious temper. "While I remained in this ſtate, ſays he, *my notions* reſpecting my duties were quite different from what I had ever entertained in times paſt. I ſaw it was ſelfiſhneſs had led me to pray—— I ſaw there was no more virtue, or goodneſs in my prayers, than there would be in my paddling with my hand in the water. I ſaw, that I had been heaping up my devotions before God, pretending, and really thinking at ſome times, that I was aiming at the glory of God; whereas, I never once truly intended it, but only my own happineſs. I ſaw, that as I had never done any thing for God, I had no claim to lay to any thing from him, but perdition on account of my hypocriſy and mockery. O how different did my duties now appear from what they uſed to do! I uſed to charge them with ſin and imperfection: but, this was only on account of the wanderings and vain thoughts attending them, and not becauſe I had no

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regard to God in them——but when I saw evidently that I had regard to nothing, but self-interest, then they appeared vile mockery of God, self-worship and a continual course of lies. I saw the whole was nothing but self-worship and an horrid abuse of God.*

THUS the good man felt respecting the duties you plead for; and was he as sincere as the better sort of sinners? Thus he wrote; thus he left things for the public, and thus President Edwards, that modern Star of the west sent them abroad, and may I not say, there never was a human performance more gratefully received and carefully read by experimental christians. Now, Sir, may we not suppose, that Mr. Brainerd repented of all his impenitent performances which he viewed in this light? And must we not conclude, that it is the duty of all others to repent of all they do, which is not done to the glory of God? Surely we must, if we make the Bible our guide. For that which is not done in a holy manner is not duty, but the violation of the gospel injunction.

Tol. "But is this possible? Is it rational? Do we find any thing like it in the standing public doctrines of the church of God, from the beginning, down to the present time? No."——

Phil. I am glad the Bishop is at London, if he be an advocate for the thirty-nine articles; for at this

* *See his life* 12*th page, and on.*——

this diſtance you may poſſibly eſcape his thunder, in not having them by heart. But, if you will only turn at ſome leiſure moment to that excellent ſyſtem of divinity, which an eminent character uſed to ſay, ought to be written in letters of gold, you will read in the thirteenth article, the ſentiment you oppoſe, in the following words: "Works done before the grace of Chriſt, and the inſpiration of the ſpirit, are not pleaſant to God: for, they ſpring not of faith in Chriſt, neither do they make men meet to receive grace—For, as they are not done as God hath willed, and commanded them to be done, we doubt not, but they have the nature of ſin." Is this, Toletus, a public ſtanding doctrine? If you ſay, no, and prefer the appellation of new divinity, I have only to obſerve it is new divinity above two hundred and twenty years old, and hope it will ſurvive all oppoſition of the modern clergy, on both ſides the water. For I really believe it coexiſted with the Bible.

Tol. I paſs on to the FIFTH ARGUMENT. "For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature things contained in the law, theſe having not the law are a law unto themſelves; which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts; their conſcience alſo bearing witneſs, and mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another." *

Phil. The text you adduce, looks with ſuch averſion from your doctrine, that it will not prove any thing for you without proving too much For, if

* *Rom. 2d, 14th.*

the perſons ſpoken of, are unregenerate, it will follow, that they are juſtified in an unregenerate ſtate, in conſequence of obedience to the law, which at once excludes the neceſſity of atonement.

Here, Sir, let us recall our leading maxim, leſt we touch the ſacred connexion with violent hands, to carry a point. In the 13th verſe, the Apoſtle ſays, "Not the hearers of the law are juſt before God, but the doers of the law ſhall be juſtified."—The 14th verſe he connects with the 13th, thus: "For, when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe having not the law are a law unto themſelves." Now, are not the doers of the law, in the 13th verſe, good people? You will not ſay, no: becauſe the text ſays, the doers of the law ſhall be juſtified, and no perſons are juſtified but the regenerate. Again, are not the doers of the law, and thoſe who do the things contained in the law, the ſame characters? You cannot ſay, no, without making words bluſh. For, who don't ſee, that thoſe children who are doers of their parent's command, act juſt like the others who do the things contained in a parental command? All the difference between them, is this—the firſt do the things of the command, and the others do the things in the command. And which are the moſt dutiful, thoſe who do the things in the command, or thoſe who do the things of the command? Or what is the difference between OF and IN? I will venture to anſwer, none at all, in the caſe before us: and thoſe who

who do the things which are in the command, are as obedient children as thoſe who do the things of the command. Hence by parity of reaſon, if we may uſe the phraſe in ſo plain a caſe, "The Gentiles who do the things contained IN the law are as good, as thoſe who are doers OF the law. But the doers OF the law are good Gentiles: for the text ſays they ſhall be juſtified; conſequently thoſe who do the things contained IN the law, are good Gentiles alſo.

Tol. But, hear me a moment: for, "That the Apoſtle is here ſpeaking of the unregenerate Gentiles, is evident from theſe three conſiderations,

Firſt, They are repreſented as doing *by nature* things contained in the law, that is, by the mere light of nature, whereas, regenerate believers obey the law from higher principles."

Phil. The phraſe, by nature, you will note, is uſed in the chapter in a different ſenſe, from what you ſuppoſe, in the preſent caſe. It is uſed to diſtinguiſh the Jews, from the Gentiles, in point of adoption, as the viſible family of God, and not to point out their natural unrenewed ſtate in diſtinction from the converted Gentiles. Hence the Apoſtle ſays in the 27th verſe, And ſhall not uncircumciſion which is by nature if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter, and circumciſion doſt tranſgreſs the law? That is, ſhall not the obedient Gentiles who have never been publicly adopted into the

visible family of God, and are destitute of your shining advantages, condemn you, who wear the public seal of the covenant, and yet remain disobedient? Let us only remember, that the Apostle is here opposing the national selfishness of the Jews, who despised the thought of going to heaven with untutored Gentiles, and you will see that he uses the phrase, by nature, to denote the national privileges of the Jews, in distinction from the uncultivated state of the Gentiles. If you will also remember, that he is here at the close of the chapter pursuing the same subject which he was treating of in the verse you have claimed, you can't but see, that you take singular freedom with the text, to say that the phrase, by nature, in the 14th verse, denotes the natural unregenerate state of the Gentiles, in distinction from their being in a state of nature, without any particular advantages from revelation.

Tol. But, "*Secondly*, They are represented as not having the law, whereas the believing Gentiles had the law of God to instruct them in their duty, as fully as the Jews."

Phil. You assert freely: but more perhaps than you can easily prove. For, the time referred to, was before the art of printing was invented: we cannot therefore suppose, that the manuscript copies of the law, were greatly multiplied: but on the other hand, that very few copies of the law, were in the hands of the Gentiles. Nor can we prove, that they were so,

ſo very plenty among the Jews. But granting that every Gentile had his copy of the law; yet the Gentiles had not the law by nature, as the Jews had.—For it was publicly given to the Jews: and was therefore their native privilege. It was originally a Jewiſh Book, in a ſenſe, which others would not claim. In this view therefore, the Gentiles remained in a ſtate of nature. Hence, the Apoſtle ſays to the Gentiles, "We who are Jews by nature and not ſinners of the Gentiles." It is therefore evident, ſince he does not mean to ſay, that the Jews came into the world with holy hearts, contrary to what he ſaid to the Romans, that he uſes the phraſe by nature, to note the advantages of the Jews in point of education, in diſtinction from the uncultivated ſtate of Gentiles: and conſequently, that the phraſe does not always denote an unrenewed ſtate.

Tol. But I add *Thirdly*, "The Apoſtle's ſcope in this paſſage is to prove, that the Gentiles are a law to themſelves, which he argues and concludes from theſe premiſes, namely, That tho' they have no revealed law, or rule of duty, yet they do the things contained in the law, and hereby evidence, that they have a natural law written in their hearts; the law of reaſon, and conſcience, which renders them in an important ſenſe, a law to themſelves."

Phil. I aſk your pardon, Sir: for the ſcope of the Apoſtle is to prove, that the grace of God is not confined to the Jews, but that good men are juſtifi-

ed, whether Jews or Gentiles. For, if his ſcope be what you freely ſay it is, we ſhall be rather puzzled to connect the chapter with itſelf, and explain ſimilar paſſages. Let us read from the 6th verſe, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, ſeek for glory and honor, immortality, eternal life. The characters here deſcribed, are regenerate. For, no perſons patiently continue to do well, and ſeek for glory and eternal life, but new creatures. In the next verſes, he deals out the threatenings of the law to ſinners in the following words: "But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath." In the 10th verſe, he returns to the regenerate again, and ſays: "But glory, honor and peace to every man that doeth good, to the Jew firſt, and alſo to the Gentile. For there is no reſpect of perſons with God. As tho' he had ſaid in Peter's words to ſilence the Jewiſh prejudice, in reference to the ſalvation of the Gentiles:" In every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted with him."— In the 12th verſe, he protracts the ſame thread of reaſoning in favor of the ſalvation of good men, of any nation whatever. "For, as many as have ſinned without law, ſhall alſo periſh without law;" The man who has ſinned againſt the light of his own conſcience without the written law, ſhall be condemned by the light of his conſcience, and ſhall periſh.—— "And, as many, as have ſinned in the law, ſhall be judged by the law. Thoſe who have ſinned in the

face

face of the revealed law, ſhall be condemned by it. "For not the hearers of the law are juſt before God; but the doers of the law ſhall be juſtified." Not thoſe who only hear it with their natural ears, as in the parable of the ſower, but thoſe who hear in the ſaving ſenſe. Now follows the text you have ſeized, to ſupport the duty of ſinners: "For, when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, theſe having not the law are a law unto themſelves; which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts." That is, when the Gentiles who have not the revealed law of God, and yet in a dark and uncultivated ſtate of nature, obediently act according to the light of natural conſcience, they ſhew their hearty conformity to the truth, as new creatures. For greater evidence of the new nature perſons cannot give, than to act according to the light they poſſeſs, and to ſhew that the law of love is impreſſed upon their hearts. "For thus ſaith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they ſhall be my people." David alſo ſays, "I delight to do thy will, O God, yea, thy law is within my heart." And when the Apoſtle expreſſes the higheſt flow of chriſtian love, he ſays, "Ye are our epiſtle, written in our hearts; written not with ink, but with the ſpirit of the living God; not in tables of ſtone, but in the fleſhly tables of the heart." It is not the current voice of ſcripture that the law is written upon the hearts of ſinners, but it is quite the reverſe. The law is written only upon

the

the hearts of the children of God. Now, Sir, since it is evident that the doers of the law in the 13th verse are good men: and since no one can suppose, that those who do the things contained in the law, in the 14th verse, are not good men, without he grossly abuses words, and cuts the plain and obvious thread, of divine reasoning, most cruelly in two: and since the phrase by nature in the same connexion imports the uncultivated state of nature, in distinction from the privilege of a written revelation, and not the natural state of man by the fall——Since these things are all glaringly evident, and the construction I give of the text, most easily coinsides with the whole passage, and the current of scripture, I claim the right of saying that the Gentiles you speak of were not unregenerate, but the real friends of God, who obeyed him from the heart, according to the dictates of conscience, which was their native law.*

Tol. We differ still in judgment; but I will add "A SIXTH ARGUMENT in support of the doctrine may be drawn from the evident design of many gospel commands and prescriptions."

Phil. I will thank you to be a little more explicit.

Tol.

* *See Pool's Synopsis on the text.—De quibus gentibus hic loquitur Paulus?* RESP. *De gentilibus ad Christum conversis: ut patet ex toto contextu, ubi factores legis, & justificati & bonum operari dicuntur.*

Of what people does Paul here speak? ANS. *Of the Gentiles converted to Christ, as is evident from the whole connexion, where the doers of the law are both said to do good, and to be justified.*

Tol. "God has commanded ſinners to read, hear, meditate and pray, becauſe it is his will, that they ſhould be awakened, and humbled, and converted in the way of their attendance on theſe duties."

Phil. Has not the ſubject of every juſt command as much time as he has duty to perform? Common ſenſe will ſay, yes. For, nothing but injuſtice can command, without granting time to the ſubject for obedience. Now, Sir, let me ſeriouſly aſk you, how much time God has allowed the ſinner for the performance of duties which belong to an impenitent ſtate? Has he given him a minute, day, month, year, or the whole time of life? It certainly lies upon you to tell, becauſe you are a public advocate for the duty of impenitent ſinners. The dilemma is your's. For, if you ſay God has not allowed any time for the duty of impenitents, you cannot find any command for ſuch duties, becauſe a command to act and time for the action, invariably go together. And, if you ſay God has allotted the ſinner as much time for the duty of an impenitent ſtate as it will take: I aſk again, how much time will it take? And, whether it is his duty to repent 'till the duties of an impenitent ſtate be all compleatly finiſhed? But, what if he ſhould die while doing theſe duties, which are antecedent to repentance? At whoſe hands will his blood be required, while he embraced your doctrine with fond hopes of doing ſome part of his duty? For, the ſinner can't think he does any thing pleaſing to God, without giving conſcience ſome eaſe. But proceed.

Tol.

Tol. "Let us particularly attend to that direction of our Saviour, *Search the ſcriptures.*"

Phil. That Chriſt here addreſſes impenitent ſinners, I do not deny: but, that he directs them to ſearch the ſcriptures, antecedent to repentance, I do deny. For, though they were naturally incapable of embracing Chriſt as the Meſſiah, until they received the evidence of his miſſion and divinity, yet they were under no natural inability to read the bible in a penitent holy manner. Hence no reaſon can be aſſigned, why Chriſt ſhould have called upon them to read the Bible without repentance. It is as eaſy to ſee why thoſe who were not convinced that Chriſt was the Saviour, ſhould have been directed to look into the prophets for evidence, as it is to account for Phillip's direction to Nathaniel, who little tho't of his proceeding from Nazareth. But, no reaſon can be given that Chriſt then directed the Jews to ſearch the ſcriptures antecedently to repentance: For there was no natural obſtacle in the way of their repentance, any more than when John, Chriſt, and the diſciples, ſome time before directed them to repent. But, we muſt conclude, if we let the Bible interpret itſelf, that he meant they ſhould read the word of God in a penitent, humble manner, and receive the teſtimony of his miſſion with love and delight.

Tol. "Since God has made a revelation of his will, and grace in his word, in which he addreſſes himſelf

himſelf to ſinners as well as ſaints, and has appointted the preaching of it as a ſtanding ordinance for the inſtruction, conviction and converſion of the one, as well as for the edification of the other, it is certainly the duty of the former to attend to it while ſuch, as well as the latter.

Phil. That God deſigns the preaching of the goſpel ſhould edify ſaints and convince ſinners, no one denies; and it is a bleſſed truth. But how in the name of reaſon and argument, does it follow, that it is the duty of a ſinner to attend while he remains an impenitent, becauſe it is the duty of chriſtians to attend with a chriſtian temper? The argument is this in plain Engliſh, It is the duty of a chriſtian to hear the goſpel with a chriſtian temper; it is therefore the duty of a ſinner, to hear it with a ſinful temper. But in a different dreſs, the reaſoning you adopt to eſtabliſh your point is this: The chriſtian does his duty, in attending to the goſpel with a holy temper, therefore the ſinner does his duty in ſome meaſure, in attending to it with a ſinful temper. For, certainly if he attends while ſuch as you ſay is duty, he muſt attend in this manner, becauſe as I have fully proved, he has no other moral temper.

Tol. "The very inſtitution of preaching as a ſtanding mean of inſtruction, and faith, infers an obligation upon unbelievers to hear, and attend it for theſe ends."

Phil.

Phil. I grant it, Sir: but not while impenitent; but to attend it in a penitent, humble manner. For plowing and ſowing are ſtanding means of reaping and gathering a crop: but yet the wicked do no part of their duty in plowing and ſowing: for the plowing of the wicked is ſin.

Tol. Were not the ſcriptures, "Written that we might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt?"

Phil. Let us then believe, and direct others to repent and believe immediately, and we ſhall do right.

Tol. "Faith cometh by hearing the word of God," the Apoſtle informs us.

Phil. I remember it, Sir: but does it follow from hence, that ſinners who have heard it repeatedly, who have had line upon line, and precept upon precept all their days, and have a great ſhare of doctrinal knowledge, will do any part of their duty in hearing it again without repentance and faith? No, Sir, the ignorant ſinner has no leave to attend the goſpel while impenitent, and the knowing ſinner has no leave to attend while he has not faith. For the former is capable of repentance, and the latter of faith:—— Nor have they leave while impenitent not to attend.

Tol. But, "If God makes uſe of his written and preached word as an inſtrument by which he prepares ſinners for, and produces faith in them, then ſurely it is their duty to be active in attending to it——the one neceſſarily infers the other."

Phil.

Phil. I have no inclination to deny that men ought to be active in attending the word: but ought they to be active in their attendance while impenitent, or to become active penitents? Impenitence you are ſenſible is a violation of the law—hence Solomon tells us that the prayer of him who turneth away his ear from hearing the law, is abomination. Surely you cannot conſiſtently plead for ſuch attention. But, ſuch is the quality of all the attention of impenitents. Accordingly God ſays, "When ye ſpread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers I will not hear."

Tol. "Why is the conduct of the Bereans, in giving a ready and diligent attention to the ſcriptures, and the preaching of Paul commended by the Holy Ghoſt, as more noble than the behaviour of others, who refuſed to attend?

Phil. I will tell you, Sir, upon the maxim we adopted when we ſat down to converſe, "That the beſt expoſition of ſcripture is ſcripture." But,

Firſt, The Bereans were more noble than the others you refer to, becauſe they conducted like chriſtians, and the others like ſinners. When Chriſt made Apoſtles of his diſciples, he gave them this criterion of religion, "He that receiveth you receiveth me." The kind reception therefore, which Paul and Silas met with, in the character of Chriſt's embaſſadors, from many of the Bereans, is an evidence in favor of their religion. For, it is not only ſaid, that

they received the word, but that they received it with ALL readineſs of mind: but, the ready mind, as any one may ſee by reading the 8th and 9th chapters of the ſecond of Corinthians, is a phraſe made uſe of to denote the moſt effective exerciſes of the chriſtian.

Secondly, Another thing which adds luſtre to the religious dignity of the Bereans, is this, that the character given of them exactly anſwers to the character given of other acknowledged converts, ſuch as Cornelius, and thoſe who "Received the word of God" at the dawning of the church among the Gentiles. Theſe converts ſpoken of in the 11th of Acts, are diſtinguiſhed from the world as the Bereans are, by its being ſaid, they received the word of God. The ſame original word alſo, which gives a character to the Bereans, is uſed to diſtinguiſh the converts of that gracious day, when ſeveral thouſand were added to the church.

Thirdly, They not only received the word with ſuch diſtinguiſhed readineſs of mind; but like faithful good men, they ſearched the ſcriptures daily, to ſee whether the Apoſtles correſponded with the Prophets. They appeared to be determined to bring what they heard to the law, and teſtimony, to try the ſpirits, to prove all things, and hold faſt that which is good: but this is the character of good men.

Fourthly, I will add, that their being called more noble than others is rather in favor of their being good

good men, becauſe the original word tranſlated noble, as Doctor Guiſe has it in his expoſition of the text, denotes a "More ſublime, and noble birth, as being born of God." I will repeat, if my memory ſerves what he ſays further: "I ſee no reaſon to apprehend but that theſe noble Bereans were of a truly religious ſpirit, according to their light, before Paul preached to them: and therefore by the concurring illumination, and influence of the Holy Ghoſt, they cheerfully embraced Chriſt as ſoon as he was revealed to them." I have now given you my view of the Bereans, and others in contraſt; and what is your's?

Tol. My judgment is this, that "Both the one, and the other were deſtitute of faith in Chriſt: for the faith of the Bereans was the conſequence, and not the principle of their attention to the word."

Phil. I grant it, that the faith of the Bereans was the conſequence of their attention to the word. But, does this prove they were not good men before the viſit of the Apoſtles? Did not Cornelius, that devout and praying man, believe that Jeſus was the Chriſt, and give up himſelf in baptiſm in conſequence of Peter's inſtruction? Did not Nathaniel alſo believe, that Chriſt was the Meſſiah in conſequence of complying with Philip's direction? He was a good man; but yet he put this unbelieving queſtion, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? It is needleſs to mention individuals, for there was no poſſible way, for good men, either Jews or Gentiles, to believe

that Chriſt was the Meſſiah, but to attend to the word as the noble Bereans did. They muſt have expected Chriſt's coming all their days, and died without believing that he had come, if they had not attended to the evidence of his miſſion, death, and reſurrection as the true Meſſiah. In ſhort, there is not even now any way for good men to believe that Chriſt has been made a ſacrifice for ſin, but to adopt the method of the Bereans. Let us therefore not defame the noble Bereans, and make them ſo ignoble, as to act out of character as ſinners, as you and Catholicus fondly ſuppoſe, becauſe they acted properly in character as good men. For, if their hiſtory were concluded without informing us that they believed in conſequence of attending to the word, you would not diſpute their religion at the time the Apoſtles went into the ſynagogue; but, in conſequence of their reception of the word, and daily attention to the ſcriptures, would conclude with Doctor Clark, the celebrated Calviniſt, that they were poſſeſſed of an "Excellent divine temper."

Tol. Perhaps not, but to proceed: "A requirement of the end, certainly includes a requirement of the neceſſary means."——

Phil. I grant it, Sir, and would not deny the connexion between means and ends, for the world; but, that God has commanded ſinners to uſe means before, and in order to repentance, I do deny, becauſe it is not true. For, the ſinner to uſe means in order to

to repentance, is to remain impenitent. The caſe of the ſinner is this, he hates God with all his heart, and loves to diſobey him. God in infinite mercy however does not cut him off, but calls upon him to repent. God calls upon him to feel differently: to love, and not hate him. Now, what has the ſinner to do when God ſpeaks to him in this manner, but repent? What is neceſſary to be done, before he repents, and loves God? When John directed the Jews to repent, what previous ſtep did he direct them to take? When Chriſt directed them to repent, what did he tell them to do in order to repentance? When the Apoſtles called upon the diſtreſſed multitude to repent, what preparatory work did they enjoin? And, what did Peter direct Simon Magus to do before repentance? Nothing, Sir, whatever. For, the capacity of repentance lay in their own breaſts: and the immediate improvement of it was required. But, ſince you think there are means for the ſinner to uſe in order to repentance, be kind enough to point them out according to the Bible. When the ſinner knows it is his duty to repent, what ſhall he do next? Shall he continue to know, and not do his duty? You will ſay, no. What then muſt he do, while he is fully convinced that it is his duty to repent? Will you direct him to repent, or will you direct him to get ready, or what will you point him to? Let me illuſtrate: There is a certain ſon, who has not only diſobeyed his father, but moſt ſhamefully abuſed him: now, what ought he to do before repentance? Is there any thing which he ought to do before ſaying, father I have ſin-

ned? If you can tell what means he ought to uſe in order to repent, while his bleeding father directs him to humble himſelf immediately, common ſenſe will be inſtructed. But, ſoon the hardened wretch turns his back upon his father, and ſays, I hate you and will leave you forever. The father replies, let me ſee your face no more without the tears of repentance. Thus he departs with the diſpleaſure of God attending him: for, the ravens of the valley are waiting to pick out his eyes, and the young eagels to eat them. But, tho' the father has loſt his ſon, he cannot loſe a father's heart. He therefore upon hearing of his diſtreſs, ſends his elder brother to make him the offer of returning, upon condition of repentance. Now, may he remain impenitent 'till his brother arrives, and makes the offer? And with what temper ſhould he hear the offer of a tender father? What has he to do, but penitently and gratefully to accept of it? The caſe is too plain to need an anſwer. Let us then apply: for, as he ought to be prepared for the gracious meſſage, ſo, Adam ought to have been prepared, for unexpected mercy: and thus all the human race ſhould wait for God's ſovereign pleaſure. As ſin is inexcuſable, ſo is impenitence. For impenitence is ſin added to ſin. But, perhaps you will ſay he cannot repent? I then aſk how can he perſiſt in impenitence? For if he have power to perſiſt in ſinning, he has power to forſake it. If he have power to love ſin, he has power to hate it. It requires no more natural ſtrength to repent, than to remain impenitent. It is as eaſy to ſpeak the truth at heart, as it is

to

to lie; and honeſty and uprightneſs are as eaſy, as their oppoſites. But, you will ſay the ſinner has no will or heart to repent: I know it, neither has the diſobedient ſon any heart to repent. But is a wicked obſtinate will the rule of direction? Shall the father direct a wicked child to do that which he can do, and remain undutiful, becauſe he will not do that which he cannot do, without being dutiful? And, may we ſuppoſe, that God directs the ſinner to that which he can do, and yet remain his enemy, becauſe he refuſes to do that which he cannot do without he becomes his friend? By no means! and public teachers may not imply it, nor indulge it. The conſequence is therefore eaſy, that the ſinner has nothing to do previous to repentance: for repentance is an immediate duty. It is alſo plain, that to repent and come to Chriſt, ſhould always begin, and end every addreſs to ſinners. This is the ſcriptural rule of direction, and he who adopts it and interweaves the moſt goſpel motives, will imitate Chriſt and the Apoſtles.

Tol. Let us embrace the truth, and our practice will be right. But, we muſt drop the conference at preſent, for we are called to Tea.

Phil. When ſhall we aſſume it again?——

Tol. As ſoon after Tea, as we can with propriety.

PART III.

Tol. DO you intend, Philalethes, to go out of town this evening?

Phil. I do not, Sir; for my company will not be ready. What is YOUR deſign?

Tol. I think I ſhall: for according to appointment I muſt wait upon a gentlemen at my houſe by eight in the morning.

Phil. We will then reſume the thread of converſation, as ſoon as you pleaſe.

Tol. I have no other arguments to offer at preſent; and if you have no other objections to make, we will part like friends, as we met.

Phil. As I have objected to your definition of human depravity, and probably proved that it does not conſiſt in the mere abſence of holineſs from the heart, but in a moral nature wholly diſtinct from animal and intellectual principles, which is totally oppoſed to God, I ſhall ſay no more upon it, but only

as

as it is interwoven with other things which may occur.

Tol. Take your own method, for the labouring oar is your's without envy.

Phil. FIRST, Then I object, it is the end which denominates the action; and as the unregenerate always act for a wrong end, all they do muſt be wrong and ſinful.

Tol. "It is not true that the whole moral good or evil of an action lies in the end of the agent in doing it."

Phil. It is not true, I believe, that there is any moral good or evil in an action without the end of the agent in doing it. For, it has been ſufficiently proved in the firſt part of the conference, that there can be no morality in actions diſtinct from the motive or end of the agent. But, if you do not retain what was ſaid, and think of any ingredient of moral action different from the end of the agent, I will thank you to mention it.

Tol. "We are under law, and accountable to God for what we do, as well as for our intention in doing it."

Phil. Yes, Sir, we are under law, and accountable to God for what we do, I am ſenſible: but, does the law require us to do any thing which can be done without

without an end in doing it? What is an action abſtractly conſidered, but motion, ſound and appearance? Suppoſe it were poſſible for a perſon without any motive, or end whatever, to ſay the Lord's prayer, what morality would there be in it any more than when ſaid by a parrot? May we ſuppoſe that the moral law obliges us to perform any actions without a view to God's glory? For when we talk of the end of an action, we muſt explain ourſelves by the law of diſintereſted love. But, ſince the divine law requires nothing but love, and forbids nothing but hatred to God and our neighbour, and ſince we have no poſſible idea of love or hatred without an end, I muſt conclude that it is the end of the agent which denominates the nature of the action: and alſo that ſinners never do any part of their duty, becauſe their ends are always ſelfiſh.

Tol. But your ſentiments "Directly lead to that abſurd and wicked tenet of Popiſh Jeſuits, that a good end will ſanctify the moſt irregular means, that it is a holy action to lie for the glory of God?"

Phil. By no means, Sir; for a man who has a good end in view, will make uſe of God's appointed means to obtain it. If his end be to give to the poor, he will not ſteal from the rich to put himſelf under advantages, becauſe God has as abſolutely forbidden the latter, as he has commanded the former. It is as much the nature of a good heart, to execute its benevolent purpoſes by thoſe means which God has appointed, as it is the nature of rain to quicken the vegetation

vegetation of plants, and herbs, when it falls in the moſt ſeaſonable ſhowers. The lying doctrine of Rome, I have nothing to do with, more nor leſs: and, if I only give your Jeſuitical Trap a negative touch, and condole with you as it ſprings, you will not complain of my incompaſſion. For, while my ſentiment is plainly this, that the man whoſe cauſe is good, has no uſe for little methods to ſupport it, why you ſhould think of faſtening the popiſh doctrine of lying for the glory of God upon me, I can't deviſe. For, upon my word I do not hold that a man can neglect duty from principle. But, if I ſoberly thought as you do, that a man could neglect duty in the exerciſe of a good principle, I ſhould ſee no difficulty in gratifying a good principle by telling religious lies. For, it would puzzle a Philoſopher to ſhew why the commiſſion of ſin, is not as eaſy from the exerciſe of a good principle, as the omiſſion of duty; becauſe it is juſt as cheap for a good man to lie from principle, as not to ſpeak the truth. Thus much muſt ſuffice for Jeſuits and their doctrines:--- for I claim no kindred: and as ſoon as you can prevail with yourſelf, not to attack the indiſſoluble connection between a good heart, and the expreſſions of it, you will diſmiſs the glare of Rome too, for, you cannot find any morality in actions aſide from the diſpoſition or end of the agent.

Tol. But, "Sinners are warranted, required, urged by God himſelf in his word to chuſe and ſeek life, to flee from the wrath to come: this then is an

end

end which they may, and ought to aim at in their religious performances."

Phil. You beg the queſtion, Sir. For, you take it for granted, that the ſinner is diſpoſed to ſeek after a certain kind of life which God commands him to ſeek. But, this is far from the truth. For, as there is but one heaven and one hell, but one narrow way and one broad way, ſo there is only a holy life and a ſinful one of a moral kind. There is not a third kind of life peculiar to moral agents.—Let me therefore aſk, does God command the ſinner to ſeek after a holy life only? If you ſay, yes, you do but give up your whole ſcheme, and if you ſay, no, the Bible will open of itſelf againſt you. But ſay as you pleaſe.

Tol. "Sinners are required to flee from the wrath to come; this is an end which we ought to aim at."

Phil. I grant it: but with what temper? You muſt ſay with a holy temper or a ſinful one: for there is not a third moral temper. The dilemma, is as before. For, if you ſay with a holy temper, then God's glory will be the end, as the Apoſtle directs: but, if you ſay with a ſinful one, I aſk for proof.—But, I ſuppoſe you will ſay, he muſt ſeek to be delivered from hell, as well as he can with ſuch feelings of averſion from miſery, as are implanted in his nature. But, let us not proceed in the dark: for, Chriſt ſays, "He that ſeeketh to ſave his life ſhall loſe it." Now, Sir, can we ſoberly conclude, that Chriſt tells the

the ſinner to ſeek after that life, which he ſays he ſhall loſe, if he ſeeks after it? Does Chriſt direct ſinners to ſeek after deliverance from hell, while impenitent, and at the ſame time declare, that they ſhall be deſtroyed, if they continue to follow the direction? No, Sir, he does not: but, he directs them to hate the life which is agreeable to impenitents, that they may inherit life eternal. As I underſtand the goſpel, Chriſt does not direct ſinners to ſeek after life, but only in the exerciſe of ſelf-denial; and 'till you adduce a divine direction to that kind of ſeeking which has no ſelf-denial in it, the objection muſt ſtand in full force. But, whether you think of it or not, while you contend for that moral ſeeking which has no ſelf-denial in it, you are as really an advocate for the duty of devils as for the duty of ſinners while impenitent. For, impenitent ſinners are as deſtitute of ſelf-denial as the devils are, and the devils are as deſirous of being delivered from God's endleſs wrath, as ſinners. The conſequence is then plain, that if ſinners do any part of their duty, in deſiring to be ſaved from hell, that the devil does more duty ſtill, becauſe he has taſted of the cup of divine wrath, and has the ſtrongeſt deſires to be delivered. But, the duty of devils is new doctrine indeed. This however is the natural conſequence of your ſentiments. Hence the Apoſtle puts the duty of ſinners, and the duty of their father the devil, upon the ſame footing in the following words: "Thou believeſt there is one God; thou doeſt well; the devils alſo believe and tremble." You will perhaps ſay with other advocates for the

duty of impenitents, that the first part of the text is against me; because it plainly says that sinners do well. I have only to reply if it be against me, it cannot be for me. But, let us attend, and permit the text to interpret itself. What does the Apostle mean when he says, "The devils also believe and tremble? Does the copulative also, connect these words with the other? Does he not compare the belief of sinners to the belief of devils? You cannot say, no, without perverting the scripture. One of these interpretations therefore must be adopted: *First*, That sinners do their duty in some measure, because they believe; for the devils believe and tremble, who in some measure do their duty: or *Secondly*, sinners do no part of their duty, because they believe; for the devils also believe and tremble who are infinitely removed from the least branch of duty. There is not a third construction, to put upon the text. He therefore who thinks, that sinners do some part of their duty at times, and unhappily improves these words, "Thou believest there is one God, thou doest well," to support it, must have the honor of being an advocate for the duty of devils. But, whether the devil or any of his children, act out of character in trembling at the thought of God's eternal wrath, and praying to be delivered from it is rather a question." For, I believe it would puzzle a divine to prove, that it is not as much the desire of the sinner to escape punishment without any reference to the divine glory, as to live in sin, because private happiness is the sole principle or motive of all his moral actions.

But

But, why ſhould I conſume any more time in proving, that it is the end of the agent which denominates the action, when inſpiration ſays, "Whatſoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," ſince you have not proved, that God requires the ſinner to act from a leſs important motive than his glory? For, you cannot ſuppoſe, that I ſhall accept of aſſertion where demonſtration is required. Only prove, that God requires us to act from a leſs motive than his glory, and I ſhall be ſilent.

Tol. Pleaſe to make your next objection.

Phil. SECONDLY, Man by the fall has become wholly ſelfiſh, ſelf-love is naturally his higheſt, his ſole principle of action: now, ſelfiſhneſs is in its own nature, enmity to God and univerſal being, and conſequently all its exerciſes and fruits muſt be wholly ſelfiſh.

Tol. To this I "Anſwer, there is a wide difference between ſelf-love and ſelfiſhneſs. Self-love, properly ſpeaking, is nothing more nor leſs, than a benevolent affection to ourſelves, a diſpoſition to ſeek our own happineſs.—And, which indeed ſeems neceſſary to conſtitute a moral agent, as without it the ſanctions of law, conſiſting in rewards and puniſhments annexed to obedience, and diſobedience would have no influence."

Phil. If I take your meaning, you are chargeable with confounding moral exerciſes themſelves, with a mere averſion from pain and deſire of pleaſure which are as common to animal agents, as to moral

agents. That, man could not be a moral agent without being capable of pleaſure and pain, I do not deny. For, aſide from a capacity of this nature, rewards and puniſhments annexed to obedience and diſobedience, would have no more influence upon him than upon a mere machine. But will it follow, becauſe man is capable of feeling the painful operations of the fire, and will ſtart from it when expoſed as ſoon as any other creature, that this is a moral exerciſe? By no means. For, if a mere averſion from living in the fire were a moral exerciſe, it is hardly ſafe to ſay, that Salamanders themſelves are not moral agents. It hence follows, that tho' there can be no moral agency without a capacity for pleaſure or pain, that this capacity, or the mere exerciſe of it, has nothing of a moral nature in it, unleſs the brutes are all moral agents, which is a ſentiment not yet incorporated. You muſt therefore prove that fallen man, aſide from the mere exerciſes of animal nature, is poſſeſſed of a love to himſelf, which is not in its nature oppoſed to others, or the objection ſtands in full force, that the fall has left the human heart in poſſeſſion of no moral exerciſe, but total unmixed ſelfiſhneſs.

Tol. "But, when the ſinner is prompted to action merely by his natural good will to himſelf, with a view to eſcape miſery, and obtain happineſs in the world to come, ſurely this is not a direct exerciſe of that wicked ſelfiſhneſs, which is enmity to God and his creatures: here is no expreſſion of diſregard to other beings."

Phil. Can you prove what you have aſſerted? Can you produce one text in the Bible which ſhews that the ſinner is poſſeſſed of a moral love to himſelf, which is not oppoſed to the glory of God? Sin is nothing but a deſire after private happineſs. It is a deſire after private happineſs which makes diſobedient ſervants, undutiful children, bad ſubjects, and bad rulers: for, if individuals were all engaged after the general happineſs of the univerſe, there could be no diſcord, nor contention whatever. But as each particle of water is loſt in the drop, and as each drop is loſt in the ſtream, and all the ſtreams are loſt in the ſea, ſo the hearts of all intelligences would be loſt in the ocean of divine love. The friends of a common intereſt only can have fellowſhip and communion with each other; and the friends of a private intereſt only can be diſunited. That perſon therefore who is only engaged after his own private happineſs, is as really an enemy to God and man, as the devil. For, as bad as the devil is, he never did any thing worſe than to love himſelf. And, if Chriſt had fallen down and worſhipped him at his requeſt, he would have been highly pleaſed and gratified. But, becauſe Chriſt refuſed, he was angry with him. So the devil's family of Jews loved Chriſt for the ſake of the loaves, they loved him in proportion to their hopes, that he would make them happy, but as ſoon as they found that Chriſt required them to hate private happineſs and become diſintereſted in their feelings, they hated him and killed him. I make theſe obſervations to ſhew that ſelf-love, or a deſire after private happi-

neſs only, is enmity to holineſs. The devil is good as long as he is pleaſed, and does not act out of character neither: ſo ſinners who care for nothing but their own private happineſs, are pleaſed with God if they are ſo ſtupid as to think he loves them, and will make them happy: but, no ſooner do they believe, that God requires them to ſubmit abſolutely to his ſovereign will, and leave themſelves without reſerve, at his diſpoſal, than their love is kindled up into the moſt mortal enmity (as Mr. Edwards has it) to the very being of God, and would deſtroy the divine nature if they could. But, ſince you think the ſinner does not always act in a ſelfiſh manner, I will put a caſe: What is the moral difference between the conduct of the Jews, when they were ſo warmly engaged to put a temporal crown upon Chriſt's head, that he might heighten their honor, and promote their private happineſs; and when they crowned him with thorns, becauſe he called them to a life of ſelf-denial? At firſt they loved him; but at laſt they hated him: and what is the difference between their love, and hatred? Will not ſelfiſhneſs account for both? And, what is the moral difference between a man's loving himſelf ſo extremely, as to be unwilling to hate his own life for Chriſt's ſake, and his being unwilling to be puniſhed, when he deſerves it for Chriſt's ſake? If the idea were not freſh in mind, I might aſk you, what is the moral difference between a ſinner's deſiring to "Eſcape miſery, and obtain happineſs in the world to come," and ſatan's deſiring the ſame? But, if you can tell me, no time will be

be loſt. For, here the deception lies. You think ſinners are better than they are. While the Bible compares the ſinner to an empty vine which bringeth forth fruit unto itſelf, you contend that it is morally right for the ſinner, as ſuch, to ſeek after his own happineſs. But, we all know, that the empty vine bears no ſort of fruit: and inſpiration knows, that thoſe in the fleſh cannot pleaſe God: and, that the children of the devil are no better than their father, tho' they may not be ſo bad. But, to prevent all miſtakes, let me hear your definition of ſelfiſhneſs.

Tol "It implies in it a criminal diſregard to others."

Phil. But, Sir, how is all this? For, if the corruption of human nature "Conſiſts in the abſence of that principle of true holineſs which it originally poſſeſſed," and, our natural principles are innocent, and uſeful, as you conſtantly ſay, I do not ſee how you can account for that ſelfiſhneſs which is a criminal diſregard to others. But, pleaſe to inform me further. For I do not ſee from what ſource ſelfiſhneſs originates, upon your principles.

Tol. "When this ſelfiſh ſpirit is the prompting principle of ſinners' actions, ſuch actions are undoubtedly ſinful, as being the poſitive exerciſes, and fruits of a ſelfiſh wicked heart."

Phil. But, Sir, where do you find room for a ſelfiſh wicked heart? For, the abſence of holineſs will not account for it, nor will the preſence of innocent

principles

principles account for it. As obſerved before in the converſation, between theſe two, depravity falls to the ground. You muſt therefore give a new definition of depravity, or a different one of ſelfiſhneſs. For, it is rather grating, to ſay, that ſelfiſhneſs is the poſitive exerciſe of a wicked heart, when at the ſame time the wicked heart, is nothing but the privation of holineſs. The truth is this, you have given a lame definition of depravity, and you muſt contradict yourſelf every time you treat of ſin as the poſitive exerciſe of a wicked heart. For, the abſence of holineſs and the preſence of innocent principles will never conſtitute a heart, or nature which is totally oppoſed to God.

But, let us go upon your principle, that human depravity conſiſts, ſtrictly ſpeaking, in the abſence of holy principles which uſed to govern; and that the natural principles of human nature, in themſelves, are innocent and uſeful. Now, Sir, pleaſe to tell me whether too much innocent ſelf-love; whether too little, or juſt enough, conſtitutes ſelfiſhneſs? For, if your ſentiment be juſt, that innocent love of courſe became ſelfiſh in conſequence of being left alone; then too much, too little, or juſt enough innocent love, conſtitutes hatred. But what portion of innocence conſtitutes offence, is a queſtion with which I muſt prevent your notion of human depravity, tho' I ſhould be loth to put it in any other connexion.—— The queſtion in my view is rather ſerious; and I hope the anſwer will not tarry long; for, without it,

it, thoſe who are apt to think with propriety, will be as much at a loſs for the difference between ſelf-love, and ſelfiſhneſs, upon your principles, as between a brook and a river.

Tol. But what is your next objection?

Phil. THIRDLY, The Bible makes it the immediate duty of ſinners to repent of ſin, and accept of Chriſt and ſalvation; but your doctrine makes ſomething elſe their immediate duty, and furniſhes the ſinner with an excuſe to delay 'till a more convenient ſeaſon. For, how can the ſinner do the things you direct him to do, before repentance, without he neglects to repent and do his firſt work, 'till thoſe things are done.——

Tol. "But this reaſoning, however plauſible, will, I think, appear fallacious, if we conſider the different views under which the ſcripture repreſents faith and repentance; which are ſometimes ſpoken of, as duties for us to perform, at other times, as gifts of divine grace."

Phil. But ſpare me a word before you go any further with the deluſion: are not repentance and faith always the gift of divine grace? You will ſay, yes. I aſk then again, what have ſinners to do when we conſider them as gifts of grace?

Tol. "When we conſider them as gifts of God, it appears highly proper to ſeek to him for them."

Phil.

Phil. The way is now prepared upon your principles, to conclude, that it is not the immediate duty of the ſinner to repent, but to ſeek after repentance with an impenitent temper, becauſe it is always the gift of God. In other words, it is not the immediate duty of the ſinner to repent and do his firſt work, the firſt, but to ſeek after repentance firſt, and do the firſt work the laſt, becauſe repentance is the gift of God. While the ſpirit of inſpiration ſays, "Repent and do thy firſt work;" your doctrine ſays, ſeek after repentance firſt, and repent after you have found it.

Tol. Pleaſe to hear me further, reſpecting faith and repentance: "If we conſider them as duties required of us, it is granted to be the preſent duty of every hearer of the goſpel, to repent and believe: but when we conſider them as gifts of God, it appears highly proper to ſeek to him for them: and therefore the immediate obligation of ſinners, to exerciſe faith and repentance, conſidered as duties, is no argument that it is not duty for them to uſe means, before and in order to obtain theſe graces."

Phil. But, pray Sir, how can it be the immediate duty of ſinners, to exerciſe faith and repentance, when at the ſame time it is their immediate duty to uſe means before and in order to obtain theſe graces? The things you are treating of, you will remember, are of ſuch a nature that they cannot be blended: for, to ſeek after repentance without repentance, is

not

not repentance. This preparatory ſeeking therefore of the impenitent, in the order of time as well as nature, is before repentance. How then is it poſſible for you to ſay, it is the immediate duty of the ſinner to do both, when one muſt be effected before the other? Where, inconſiſtency, is thy influence!

You call to mind the ſtory of a certain creditor, who upon meeting with his debtor, laid his injunctions upon him to pay him a ſum of money, which had been due ſeveral years. The debtor informed him, the money was ready for him at any time, but in conſequence of being abroad, he could not poſſibly command it, ſhort of a day's ride. Upon this, the creditor replied—it is your duty to pay me immediately, and if you do not inſtantly count the money, the law ſhall make the next demand, and have its courſe. But, ſince you have not the money at hand, and there is no other method to adopt, it is your immediate duty to ride after it. But, pleaſe to remember, though it is your immediate duty to uſe means to obtain it, that you are under obligations to make an immediate payment upon the ſpot. Go then immediately and bring the money, but pay me this inſtant, or you ſhall ſmart for it, for I will not wait any longer.

But, let us explain the nature of theſe two diſtinct and immediate duties to the ſinner, upon your principles, leſt he ſhould labor under a miſtake. It is your immediate duty to repent; but ſince repentance is the

the gift of God, it is your immediate duty to ſeek after it, while in an impenitent ſtate. Theſe are both your immediate duties: but yet, one muſt be done before the other. For, your immediate obligation to repent as a duty, is no argument, that it is not duty for you to uſe means before, and in order to obtain repentance. Pray, Sir, for conſcience ſake don't ſtrangle things in this manner.——It is highly diſhonorable to the truth. For an immediate duty before an immediate duty or two immediate duties, is not only an immediate contradiction, but profanation of the goſpel injunction.

Tol. But, after all, "There is a diſtinction to be made between what God requires of us as ſtrict duty, and means of obtaining his bleſſings."

Phil. No, Sir, you miſtake the matter, and beg the queſtion; for all the duty which God commands, is ſtrict duty, and all the duty likewiſe which he commands, is to uſe the means of grace to obtain the bleſſings of the goſpel. He therefore who uſes the means of grace as he is commanded, ſtrictly does his duty and obtains the goſpel bleſſings. Pray, then, do not make a diſtinction between ſtrict duty, and the path of duty which leads to glory: for there is no conceivable difference. The whole work of man, lies in the narrow way which leads to life.

Tol. Pleaſe to remember, that, "Perfect love and obedience to God, is our preſent and perpetual duty:

duty: but this is not preſcribed to any of our fallen race, as the means of ſalvation."

Phil. You make me think of a traveller without his compaſs: for, to prove that it is both the immediate duty of the ſinner to repent and to do ſomething before repentance at the ſame time, you take this unfortunate ſtep, that perfect obedience is our preſent duty, but, that this is not preſcribed to any of the fallen race as the means of ſalvation. But, here let us compare the two caſes. What reſemblance is there between the qualification of a perſon for juſtification, and the qualification of one for repentance? Is the temper of the former like that of the latter? Does the ſinner aſk God for repentance, as the penitent aſks him for ſalvation? And has God connected the repentance of the ſinner with his averſe deſire in aſking for it, as he has the ſalvation of the penitent with his real deſire for it in the name of Chriſt? Theſe things you dare not ſay. I have a right therefore to conclude, that what you aim at to prove your point is as wide from the purpoſe as any thing you could have hit upon. What you crave, is this, I ſuppoſe; that becauſe the imperfect doings of chriſtians are acceptable for Chriſt's ſake, that it hence follows that ſome doings of the ſinner antecedently to repentance, which are deſtitute of holineſs, are yet in a meaſure dutiful. But, the falſity of the concluſion is flagrantly manifeſt, by only ſaying, as is the tree, ſo will be the fruit. But, the tree is corrupt.

Tol. Let us then look of the argument: "For, if the immediate obligation of ſinners to believe and repent, is a proof that nothing is or can be duty, ſhort of repentance and faith, then it will equally follow, that ſince, ſinleſs perfection is our immediate duty, therefore nothing ſhort of this, is or can be required or accepted by God."

Phil. No, Sir, your reaſoning faulters. For, it will never follow, that a ſmall degree of true faith is not acceptable for Chriſt's ſake, becauſe impenitent doings are not, any more than it will follow that a ſmall degree of real argument, is not acceptable to diſcerning minds, becauſe the total privation of it is very unacceptable. And how you happened to think of this involuntary conſequence, either as a divine or logician, I cannot tell.

THE point you labour to eſtabliſh is this, that God requires ſomething of ſinners antecedently to repentance, and when I object, that the doctrine is untrue, becauſe friendly to delay, you make this unfortunate ſtep, that if ſome impenitent doings are not required, that no degree of faith, ſhort of perfection, can be accepted by God. But, as hinted juſt now, who does not ſee that the caſes are not parallel? If impenitent doings were in their nature holy, then however faint and imperfect, they would be acceptable to God, like the feeble exerciſe of precious faith; but ſince, the beſt exerciſes of ſinners before repentance from your own confeſſion, are deſtitute of holineſs, and "Eſſentially defective," you do nothing

thing leſs than beg the queſtion in making parallel caſes of them. But, you will ſay again, that God requires ſinleſs perfection immediately, as well as immediate repentance: and therefore, if any thing ſhort of ſinleſs perfection is acceptable for Chriſt's ſake, it follows, that ſomething ſhort of genuine repentance is acceptable, in a low degree, ſome how or other. I readily grant, that God does require ſinleſs perfection immediately, and we are all exceedingly culpable, in not being perfect as God is perfect; but how in the name of reaſon does it follow, that unholy exerciſes are acceptable to God for the ſake of Chriſt, or for their own ſakes, or any thing elſe, becauſe the feeble and imperfect exerciſes of ſaving faith, are acceptable for the ſake of the Mediator? You muſt therefore, Sir, upon reflection, poſtpone the concluſion, 'till you can prove that the beſt exerciſes of ſinners, which are eſſentially defective in point of holineſs, are yet eſſentially holy. For common ſenſe can never ſee that the exerciſes of imperfect faith are not acceptable to God for Chriſt's ſake, becauſe the faithleſs exerciſes of ſinners are wholly unacceptable, any more than that a ſmall part of a ſum of money is not acceptable to the creditor, becauſe counterfeit is wholly unacceptable.

If it pertained to the queſtion in diſpute, to prove that the requirements of the goſpel were as binding as the precepts of the law, it might be demonſtrated without a ſhadow of difficulty, that the new commandment is as ſtrict and obligatory as the old. For,

grace does not wink at imperfection. When the gospel therefore requires repentance, it requires perfect repentance; and when it requires faith, perfect faith is the object. But, bleſſed be the grace of God, there is pardon for him who has the leaſt degree of precious faith. I might with freedom, I ſay, attend to this, if pertinent, but ſince the queſtion in debate, whether God requires any duty of men but holineſs, can eaſily be determined without anſwering this remote one, whether the goſpel requires any thing leſs of men than the law, I ſhall ſay nothing upon it. For, tho' you could prove that the goſpel is ſo mild as to require imperfect holineſs, you would ſtill have to prove that it requires thoſe exerciſes which are deſtitute of holineſs, and are eſſentially defective. For, it will not follow that God requires chaff, becauſe he accepts of blighted wheat, becauſe the chaff muſt be all winnowed away. God does not require thoſe things now, which will not be acceptable for Chriſt's ſake at the Great Day. He does not therefore require any thing but holineſs: for without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord. Thoſe things which you call duties, but which ſome of the Fathers uſed to call ſplendid ſins, ſhining ſins, and ſilken ſins, are not required.

Tol. But, "*Thirdly*, There is ſtill a further fallacy couched in the objection: for it implicitly takes it for granted, that becauſe a believing, penitent heart is our immediate duty, therefore nothing can be preſent duty which does not flow from ſuch a heart."

Phil.

Phil. As it is not ſo honorable to expect others to believe what we ſay, without evidence, I ſhall attempt to wipe off the imputation of fallacious reaſoning, in conſequence of taking the thing for granted which calls for proof. Let us then attend. You aſſert that there are duties to be done by the ſinner, antecedently to repentance; but I object, and ſay, that your ſentiment is helpful to delay. For if it be the ſinner's duty to do ſomething before repentance, it cannot be his immediate duty to repent, becauſe two immediate duties, one of which is antecedent to the other, is an immediate contradiction. You muſt ſee that your ſcheme falls to the ground in a moment, if you cannot prove that it is the duty of the ſinner to do ſomething before he repents: and who does not ſee, that if it be the ſinner's duty to do any thing before he repents, that it cannot be his immediate duty to repent? For, if two things are of ſuch a nature that one muſt be done before the other, it needs no ſtretch of thought to ſee, that both of them cannot be immediate duties. For inſtance, if it be my immediate duty to protract the converſation with you upon the preſent ſubject, it is not my immediate duty to leave the room to go to my family: ſo if it be the immediate duty of the ſinner to attend the means of grace as an impenitent, it is not his immediate duty to attend them as a penitent. For, to attend them as an impenitent, is one thing, and to attend them as a penitent, is another of a very different nature: for, certainly you will not contend that a man can attend the means of grace as an impeni-

tent, and a penitent alſo, at one and the ſame time. I hence conclude, as before, that no ſinner can poſſibly attend the duties which you plead for, antecedently to repentance, without delaying the work of repentance, and the ſalvation of his ſoul. But, you will aſk, what then ſhall he do? Shall he ſit ſtill? I anſwer as I have before in the converſation, that he muſt not ſit ſtill in an impenitent ſtate, nor may he go to the right or left, but he muſt repent and do his firſt work. He may not indulge an impenitent heart in attending to the means of grace, nor in neglecting them; for it is his immediate duty to commence a penitent. God gives him no licence to live in ſin.

Tol. But have I not "Shewn that there is a diſtinct and immediate obligation lying upon ſinners, to perform the external acts which God has commanded, as well as to do them with a good heart?"

Phil. As an opponent, I can modeſtly ſay, you have not; and tho' I cannot tell when you will, I can eaſily gueſs the reverſe. In the morning conference it has been proved, *Firſt*, That there is no morality in mere externals, and if I miſtake not, you have granted it. *Secondly*, It has alſo been proved that there is no morality in the executive acts of the will, but only as they are connected with the heart. And, *Thirdly*, Have I not leave to add, it has been proved, that the heart of the ſinner is totally wicked. As I then hinted, you have but one ſhift to make, which

which is this, that the word heart is a very indefinite term: but if you will venture your cauſe here, you muſt do it at your own expence. For love is all that God requires, and hatred is all that he forbids; but love and hatred do not ſpring from the head, hands, nor feet, but from the heart, and the heart only. The Bible knows of no other ſource of moral exerciſes. When the ſcripture uſes the term heart, affection is the thing intended, and not intellect. The term is uſed in the ſame ſenſe by the beſt authors, in common converſation, and prayer: and, no one I believe feels any inconveniency ariſing from this acceptation of the word, but the perſon whoſe cauſe will not bear the light of ſtrict examination. For, as the day by general conſent is known by light, as the night is known by darkneſs, and as the good man is known by a good heart, and the bad man by a bad heart, ſo the heart is diſtinguiſhed by moral exerciſes and affections. It hence follows, ſince God, who knows the character of the ſinner's heart, has ſaid that it is not only full of evil, but continually evil, that his exerciſes or actions are not any of them in the leaſt degree conformed to the rule of duty.

But, let us enquire a moment whether the deſcription the Bible gives of the great family of mankind, leaves us the ſhadow of reaſon to conclude, that the moral exerciſes of one unrenewed man are better than others, I will preſent you with the ſcriptural contraſt of moral characters.———

The

The ſacrifice of the wicked, is abomination to the Lord.

But the prayer of the upright, is his delight.

The thoughts of the wicked, are abomination to the Lord.

But, the thoughts of the righteous, are right.

Excellent ſpeech becometh not a fool.——

But, the words of the pure, are pleaſant words.

The Lord is far from the wicked.——

But, he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

The mouth of fools, poureth out fooliſhneſs.

She openeth her mouth with wiſdom.——

With their tongues they have uſed deceit.——

In her tongue, is the law of kindneſs.——

He that killeth an ox, is as if he ſlew a man.

To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite heart.

The fool hath ſaid in his heart there is no God.

The Lord liveth, and bleſſed be my Rock.

Why call ye me Lord, Lord?

Call upon me, and I will deliver thee.——

Depart ye curſed.——

Come ye bleſſed.——

Now, Sir, if you or Catholicus will prove that the left hand column is not a true repreſentation of all the wicked, becauſe they do not all act uniformly in character, and will alſo be kind enough to diſtinguiſh their moral characters from others by ſcripture, we ſhall find a third column for them. For, I have no notion of blending characters of different complexions together. If it is the language of the Bible, that ſinners do not all wear the ſame uniform, moral characters, before the Judge of men's hearts, tho' to our ſcanty minds, they at times appear differently, I wiſh to ſee it demonſtrated from ſcripture.

ſcripture. For, to conclude that the moral exerciſes of the wicked are ſometimes pleaſing to God, becauſe ſome of the moral exerciſes of the righteous are diſpleaſing to him, we do not think is either logical or divine. If Saul's prayer, in 1. Sam. xxvi, 19, was not of a moral nature, we have nothing to do with it in determining his moral character any more than we have with the chattering of a ſwallow, and the mourning of a dove: but if it was of a moral nature, it does not follow, that it was in any meaſure good, becauſe Jonah's prayer in his angry ſtate of mind, was very bad.

Tol. You have now, I ſuppoſe, particular reference to the author of "The ſacrifice of the wicked explained and diſtinguiſhed."

Phil. Yes, Sir, I have: and when that gentleman will prove from the word of God, that any of the wicked are poſſeſſed of better moral principles than reprobated ſouls will carry with them to the bar of God, and into endleſs darkneſs to finiſh their torments, I will make him an ample confeſſion for this open attempt to expoſe his ſentiment, which I think tends to flatter ſinners, and blind their minds againſt a proper conviction of their real characters. For, we may ſpend our breath in telling ſinners that the reigning temper of their hearts is enmity againſt God, and we ſhall leſſen their advantages to ſee the true ſtate of their characters, in proportion to informing them

them either explicitly or implicitly that God requires any thing of them but heart-felt holineſs, and thoſe fruits which will be acceptable for Chriſt's ſake at the conſummation of things. It is the nature of the ſinner's heart to graſp at ſhadows, and loſe the ſubſtance, and he cannot be told too carefully to repent and do his firſt work immediately: for the next moment it may be for ever too late.

Tol. But in reference to external duty, and the duty of the heart, who "Will ſay that theſe two parts of duty are ſo inconſiſtent with each other, that both of them cannot be performed or juſtly required of ſinners at the ſame time?"

Phil. Any one will ſay it, and any one will contradict it who adopts your ſentiments, and follows your example. For you ſay this way, or the reverſe, as the urgency of the caſe requires. Excuſe my freedom, and I will make good the aſſertion. For, *Firſt*, To prove that ſinners have ſomething to do before repentance you ſay, "A requirement of the end, certainly includes a requirement of the means: and ſince the means muſt be previous to the end, ſinners are therefore bound to ſuch an attendance on the one as does not imply or ſuppoſe the other." Now, Sir, how can the ſinner uſe means in order to repentance, which muſt be previous to repentance, and are not implied in it, and repent at the ſame time? Is this conſiſtent divinity? If ſo, what can be inconſiſtent? Further, while treating of means in order

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to obtain holineſs, you have ſaid, "When theſe things are enjoined on them under the notion of means, the primary intention of ſuch directions is, that they ſhould attend them in the beſt manner they are able antecedently to faith, as is evident to common ſenſe." I aſk therefore again, how can a ſinner attend the means in the beſt manner he is able antecedently to faith, and believe at the ſame inſtant? Are theſe things conſiſtent? But, *Secondly*, When you are crouded with this difficulty, that your preparatory duties give the ſinner a ſoft pillow to reſt his painful conſcience, when he is commanded to repent immediately, you make this a *ſalvo*, that it would be highly abſurd, to "Say that theſe two parts of duty are ſo inconſiſtent with each other, that both of them cannot be performed or juſtly required of ſinners at the ſame time." But, Sir, is it ſatisfactory? For, to uſe your own term, it muſt be abſurd indeed, to ſuppoſe that God requires the ſinner to uſe means before he repents, to obtain repentance, and at the ſame time requires immediate repentance. For, this at once deſtroys the diſtinction between means and ends, and makes different times the ſame point of time. If, therefore you chuſe to ſay, that the externals of religion may be performed when religion itſelf is performed, I wiſh you would not ſay, that the ſinner is obliged to perform them as means to obtain religion, and that both may be done at the ſame time.—For, tho' nothing can be more inconſiſtent, ſome inattentive mind may think you are orthodox. I never wiſh to hear error ſanctified by now and then a ſavoury

expreſſion:

expreſſion: for, it unhappily tends to enervate the ſigns, and indexes of truth. While you plead for duties to be performed by the ſinner before repentance, you cannot conſiſtently ſay, that he can perform them and repent at the ſame time.

Tol. But, "Theſe very commands which make it the duty of the hearers of the goſpel to believe, and repent, infer an obligation on them, as I have already noted, to do whatever is neceſſary on their part, in order to a compliance with it."

Phil. It ſeems then ſtill, that there is ſomething to be done by the ſinner, before he complies. But, what is it? Has he to aſcend to heaven to bring Chriſt down, or has he to deſcend to the deep to call him up? What has he to do, when Chriſt is offered without money, and without price, but to accept of him? What has the needy perſon to do when the benevolent man preſents his charity, but to accept of it? What elſe can he be directed to do? Can any one tell him how to accept of it, any more than he can tell him how to be hungry or how to reliſh an agreeable entertainment? Let us then preſent duty to the ſinner's mind——let us deſcribe it carefully——let us addreſs all the motives of the law, and goſpel to induce him to comply——Let us preſs him with precept upon precept in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon to comply immediately: but, to tell him how to love, we cannot, any more than we can new-ſet a pulſe, and teach the blood how to flow through the veins.

Tol.

Tol. "These commands being founded on the mediatorial plan of mercy are designed to excite, and encourage sinners to seek that grace which may enable them to a saving compliance."

Phil. It hence follows upon your principles, that the gospel does not require sinners to repent immediately. For, if the mediatorial commands are designed to excite sinners to seek after grace, to enable them to a saving compliance, they cannot be designed to excite sinners to comply immediately without any more unrenewed seeking. The consequence is then too plain, that as sin is the parent, so your scheme is the nurse of delay. Pray, Sir, then, for the sake of convincing sinners, that they are in a sinful state rather than in a state of calamity, do not treat them as tho' they were under a natural inability to repent, and believe the gospel: for the Bible does not. They ought not to be furnished with that sin-excusing, self-justifying plea: for they love to say they cannot. It is a comfort to many self-deluded, and soul-destroying creatures. You cannot please the sinner better, than to give him what he can enjoy without a change. But, let me say the sinner may never be directed to do that which he may do, and yet be lost. Repent then, and do thy first work as the Bible says, is better than any direction we can adopt.

Tol. "The gospel is wholly designed for the relief and salvation of sinners, and therefore calls them to faith and repentance, not merely as present duty, but as the appointed medium of their salvation."

Phil. Let me underſtand your meaning more fully: What, Sir, is the difference between ſinners being directed to repent, and believe as preſent duties, and their being directed to repent and believe as the appointed medium of ſalvation?

Tol. "The goſpel directs them to ſeek in the way of its appointment that grace, whereby they may practice theſe duties and obtain eternal life."

Phil. But, the queſtion returns, which is the appointed way of the goſpel? Is it to repent, and believe, or ſeek after theſe graces with a graceleſs temper? As you will ſay the latter, I aſk you for ſcriptural demonſtration: you have made ſo ſpare a uſe of ſcripture in the converſation, that I have a right to aſk you for it. For, tho' I cannot impeach your judgment, becauſe you do not multiply texts to prove, that God commands ſinners to ſeek after repentance, before they repent; yet I muſt impeach your ſentiment, if you do not produce any.

But, not to urge too far: Let me aſk you what direction you would give a dying ſinner. His ſpeech fails, but in all the anguiſh of a ſinful Chriſtleſs ſoul upon the very edge of the pit, he beckons for your ear. You no ſooner lend it, than he whiſpers out his caſe——I am a poor Chriſtleſs ſinner——I am haſtening to deſtruction, and what ſhall I do——the thought itſelf is hell to my ſoul——what ſhall I do! The caſe, Sir, is ſolemn. The laſt golden ſands are falling,

falling, and you have time to give him but one direction only: and, how will you addreſs him? Will you direct him to repent, and believe immediately, or will you tell him to ſeek after repentance and faith as well as he can, while he remains an impenitent? Will you give him a direction which he can follow and be loſt, or will you give him one which he cannot follow and be loſt? The goſpel you have juſt ſaid, is deſigned for the relief and ſalvation of ſinners; what direction then will you now give, to relieve your own conſcience and the ſoul of the dying, faithleſs ſinner? If you ſay, you will not give him one, which he can follow and be loſt, you do but ſay, that your ſentiments are of no uſe at a dying moment. But, if you remain determined to ſupport what you have advanced, and give a direction which he may comply with, and be loſt, I have only to obſerve; that you and the ſinner will ſoon meet at the bar of God. But, if your directions are not proper for dying men, they are not proper for living men, for living men are all dying men: and we cannot, any of us tell, who will ſhoot the gulph the next, the living or the dying. Let us then, give them all ſuch directions, that they cannot follow and be loſt.

Tol. But, have I attempted to ſupport directions which are not calculated for dying ſinners?

Phil. I think you have, Sir, or I ſhould not diſpute with you a ſingle moment: for living men and dying ones, are the ſame. Theſe are your own words

you may remember, while treating of the means of repentance, and faith. "A requirement of the end certainly includes a requirement of the neceſſary means—and ſince the means are, and muſt be previous to the end, ſinners are therefore bound to ſuch an attendance on the one, as does not imply nor ſuppoſe the other. For it is contrary to common ſenſe, to ſay they are bound to uſe means, in order, to an end, and yet they muſt be firſt in poſſeſſion of the end."—Thus you have ſaid in a different part of the converſation, "Some things are preſcribed to ſinners in ſcripture as means neceſſary, and conducive to their firſt obtaining faith."———Again, you ſay, "The primary intention of ſuch directions is, that they ſhould attend them in the beſt manner they are able, antecedently to true faith."———Theſe, Sir, are your own words: and you have uſed them to prove this point, that it is as really the duty of the ſinner to uſe means in order to repent and believe, as it is to repent and believe, in order to be ſaved.—It therefore follows, ſaving pardon, for your fatal diſtinction between repentance, and faith, as the gifts of God, and duties for us to perform, that you cannot without murdering your whole ſcheme, direct the poor dying impenitent to believe in Chriſt: nor can you as obſerved before, upon your principles direct any one whatever to repent and believe, 'till after he has become a penitent. For means muſt be uſed before, and in order to obtain the end: and the end you ſpeak of is repentance. To call upon a ſinner therefore to repent immediately, upon your ſyſtem,

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is not more conſiſtent than to direct him to go to heaven, without lodging his body in the grave.

Tol. Why do you ſay this?——————

Phil. I ſay it, becauſe you invariably ſuppoſe there is ſomething to be done by him antecedently to repentance, and not only ſo, but that he is really under a natural inability to repent and believe, even tho' he were ready. You fairly imply, to ſay the leaſt, that the ſinner labours under an excuſable debility to repent; but that no ſuch difficulty lies in the way of his getting ready.

Tol. This is what I ſay; "Thoſe very commands which make it the preſent duty of the hearers of the goſpel to believe and repent, infer an obligation on them, to do whatever is neceſſary on their part, in order to a compliance with it."

Phil. This, Sir, is what I had particular reference to: and the communication is this, that the ſinner is able to get ready to repent, but not able to repent. The conſequence is then plain, as we have ſeen before, that upon your principle, it cannot be the immediate duty of the ſinner to repent. For, it is not the immediate duty, nor can it ever be the duty of a perſon, to perform that which he has not natural ſtrength to perform, as obſerved in the morning, any more than it is the duty of a little child, to carry a rock to the top of a mountain. But, explain yourſelf, if you pleaſe more fully, to prevent miſtake.

Tol. I am not averſe from freedom, and therefore add, that "Theſe very commands (which make it the preſent duty of the hearers of the goſpel to repent) being founded on the mediatorial plan of mercy are deſigned to excite and encourage ſinners, to ſeek that grace which may enable them to a ſaving compliance, and not to put them upon a vain and hopeleſs effort to believe of themſelves, independently of ſpecial grace; which would turn the goſpel into mere rigid law, inſiſting on the performance of preſent duty, but offering and conveying no grace to encourage and enable them to it, and hereby as effectually cutting them off from ſalvation as the law of ſinleſs perfection."

Phil. The ſentiment is ſtill the ſame, that the ſinner is able to ſeek that grace which may enable him to comply, that he is able to get ready, but not to comply. But is this the truth? Is there the leaſt ſhadow of ſuch a diſtinction in Chriſt's directions? Did he treat ſinners as tho' they were able to get ready to come to the goſpel feaſt, but not able to come? Did Chriſt tell the man who pled the decorum of burying his father, antecedently to following him, to let the dead bury their dead, but to get ready to follow him? Than the interment of a father, a more plauſible excuſe, cannot be given. And what reſpect did Chriſt pay to it, but this, let the remains of your father waſte away, and mingle with their native duſt, without a common burial, rather than the funeral ſhould detain you from following me immediately.

diately. Your father is dead: and a living dog is better than a dead lion. Abandon then all your pleas and give me your heart this inſtant. For now is the accepted time. But ſince in oppoſition to the ſinner's being called upon in the goſpel to repent immediately, upon the footing of his being as able to comply as to get ready, you ſay theſe commands are deſigned to excite ſinners to ſeek that grace which may enable them to a ſaving compliance: and not to put them upon a vain and hopeleſs effort to believe of themſelves, inſiſting upon the performance of preſent duty, but conveying no grace to enable them to it, and hereby cutting them off from ſalvation, as effectually as the law of ſinleſs perfection: in the view of this reaſoning, I aſk whether God has not a right to command a ſinner to accept of Chriſt without giving him a heart to comply? If you ſay he has, then what you juſt ſaid is leſs than nothing to your purpoſe. But, if you ſay he has not a right to command without giving a diſpoſition to obey, you will give me leave to obſerve, that you pay no ſmall compliment to the ſentiment of the ſlothful ſervant. He was poſſeſſed of a natural talent, but God gave him no heart to improve it: when the improvement therefore was called for, I knew thou art an hard maſter, reaping without ſowing, was his excuſe for the miſimprovement of it. This is the ſinner's criminal plea when he reads that God commands all the children of men to accept of ſalvation, but gives hearts to the elect only, and leaves the reſt to inevitable ruin: and if your mode of expreſſion cannot be eaſily

improved

improved by the ſinner who attacks the divine ſovereignty, in this reſpect it is better than I tenderly and ſoberly fear. To prevent therefore the temptation of indulging the moſt diſtant thought, that the ſalvaon of the hearers of the goſpel is ſuſpended upon a dubious, unreaſonable point, if God commands all to accept, but enables only the elect; let us rightly improve this goſpel antidote: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Is thine eye evil becauſe I am good?——For many be called, but few choſen."

Tol. The things you have offered ſhall be attended to: but have you another formal objection to make?

Phil. FOURTHLY, I object, that the diſtinction you make between moral goodneſs and holineſs, is groundleſs, for moral goodneſs is holineſs; it therefore follows, as there is no medium between holineſs and ſin, that the beſt exerciſes of ſinners which are confeſſedly deſtitute of the leaſt degree of holineſs are not morally good, but evil.

Tol. "Anſwer, *Firſt.* The ſcriptures frequently and plainly ſpeak of a goodneſs in moral actions, diſtinct from true holineſs; for they expreſsly ſay of one and another unholy perſon, that they did RIGHT, WELL, ACCORDING TO THE COMMANDMENT OF THE LORD: that ſome of their conduct was NOBLE, and the like."

Phil. Let us gentlemen all attend, for there is a King coming upon the ſtage, if I underſtand appearances.

Tol. True, Sir, there is: and he has a kingly part to act.

Phil. No doubt, Sir; but who is he?

Tol. "Amaziah, one of the Kings of Judah."

Phil. What was his character?——

Tol. "These words present us with his moral character in miniature. *And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; but not with a perfect heart.*"

Phil. What is meant by his doing right?

Tol. "When it is said of Amaziah, that he did that which was right, the natural and obvious meaning is this, that in some instances he did that which was in some respects agreeable to the law of God, which is the great standard of right."

Phil. What is meant by its being said, "But not with a perfect heart?

Tol. "He had not that hearty respect to God which distinguishes the truly good man from the sinner."

Phil. If you have his moral features right, he was a rare character indeed: for he was neither truly good, nor wholly bad, but something between both, and I rather question, whether the Jews can boast of such another since the sceptre departed.

Tol.

Tol. You ſmile: but "The real import of the whole, is this, that he did his duty in ſome reſpects, but yet was deſtitute of a holy temper of mind."

Phil. But if he was deſtitute of a holy temper, he was poſſeſſed of a ſinful temper. For, between holineſs and ſin there is no moral medium: hence Chriſt ſays, "He that is not with me, is againſt me." The notion of an intermediate character between holy and ſinful, is very idle, whether we attempt to eſtabliſh it, either by reaſon or ſcripture. For, no mortal has more than dreamed, of a moral exerciſe between holy and ſinful. A moral heart which is deſtitute of holineſs, and ſin both, is one more heart than man can claim, except when he dreams. But a dream of this nature may not be called divinity. For where love to God ends, enmity begins. There is no ſtate of moral indifference reſpecting the law of God. Between moral approbation and diſapprobation there is no room for another exerciſe, any more than there is room for a ball between two perfect cubes, while one lies upon the other. 'Till you therefore penetrate beyond the vulture's eye, and deſcribe the dormant principle of reigning enmity to God, which keeps all its exerciſes ſo faſt aſleep at times, that they do not interfere with moral actions, you muſt not blame me while I conclude that no moral action can be deſtitute of holineſs, without being full of ſin. For the old man and the new man, are all the moral men we have any account of in the Bible. A man who is neither old nor new is a ſpurious character.

character. The old man will not own him becauſe his moral exerciſes are not ſinful, and the new man will not own him becauſe his moral exerciſes are not holy: ſince therefore you have adopted him, you muſt either maintain or let him die.

Tol. If moral exerciſes are all either holy or ſinful; if every moral exerciſe is either with Chriſt, or againſt him, in what light do you view the character of Amaziah? For he was not a "Good man," and yet he did that which was right.

Phil. He was a wicked man: I would rather however ſay he was a hypocrite. For he bent the knee before the altar of the Lord and the devil, both.

Tol. But "It is ſaid of this prince, not barely that he did right, but that he did right in the ſight of the Lord, who ſees all actions and things juſt as they are."

Phil. This preſents no difficulty: for, God's ſight in giving viſible characters, terminated upon viſible actions. As God gave a viſible hiſtory of Amaziah, he founded it upon viſible and not inviſible facts. He gave him ſuch a character, as any impartial hiſtorian would have done without any knowledge of the heart, but only as it appeared in external actions. For the ſame reaſon that Chriſt did not tell the diſciples before the doleful hour, that Judas was a devil, God, as the public head of that people, gave the public characters of kings and others, according to what

appeared

appeared to others, and not according to his knowledge of the heart. If a King conducted as God commanded, in the view of his ſubjects and others, he appeared to be a good King, and God gave him a good character: and if he diſobeyed the command in the view of others, his character was drawn accordingly. To ſpeak with reverence, it is not poſſible for us to ſee how God could have maintained his own character before the world who were waiting to defame it, otherwiſe than treating kings and people before external judges, according to external appearance. As men cannot ſee the character of the heart, except by the medium of external actions, the characters of all the kings are drawn from their viſible behaviour. Hence the good and bad things of David and Solomon, Joaſh and Hezekiah, and all the reſt are given according to the appearance they made to the world: and we may ſay with the greateſt ſafety if all the wicked kings of Iſrael and Judah had conducted as well in the view of the world, as Solomon did before his wives drew away his heart, that we ſhould not know 'till the day of judgment, which will reveal the heart, but they were good men in the ſpiritual ſenſe. The conſequence is then plain, that it does not follow that Amaziah did any part of his duty, merely becauſe it is ſaid, that he did right in the ſight of the Lord.

Tol. "This hypotheſis is contrary to the plain, literal ſenſe of many inſpired texts, which conſtantly aſſert that one and another graceleſs man did right, but

but this ſcheme ſays they did nothing which was right in any reſpect, but only ſeemed to be right."

Phil. No, Sir, no one contradicts the letter of ſcripture in ſaying that a man only ſeemed to do right, in acting outwardly like a good man, when directly upon it he made it evident by oppoſite actions, that he had no ſincerity of heart. For, you will not contend that hypocriſy is right, tho' a man cannot poſſibly be chargeable with it, except he appears to be a good man when he is not.

Tol. "But, certainly we ought not thus to evade and contradict the ſacred text, unleſs there is an abſolute neceſſity for it.

Phil. I only need the letter of the ſacred text at preſent: for that ſays, Amaziah did that which was right in the ſight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart: and this is the character of the hypocrite: for by their fruits ye ſhall know them. Sometimes right, and ſometimes wrong fruits, compleat the character.

Tol. "The literal and moſt natural ſenſe is always to be preferred to a figurative one, unleſs there appear plain and convincing reaſons to the contrary."

Phil. I grant it, Sir; but do I uſe *figures* in concluding that Amaziah was a hypocrite, becauſe the Bible ſays he ſometimes did right, and ſometimes wrong?

Tol. "The very character given here of Amaziah, neceſſarily implies, that ſome reſpect was had to his heart: for it is here ſaid of him, that his heart was not perfect, even when his external behaviour is declared to be right."

Phil. I know it, Sir, and this makes the hypocrite: for, if his heart had been with the altar of God, his actions would not have betrayed him afterwards. But the plain fact is this, he ſometimes appeared very good, and ſometimes very bad, and conſequently a true hiſtory of his conduct is that of a hypocrite.

Tol. Then "It will follow, that it appeared from his conduct that he did no duty at all, nothing which was right in any ſenſe."

Phil. Without any doubt, Sir: for it appears from his conduct that he was a hypocrite: and who will plead for the duty of hypocrites?

Tol. "Upon theſe principles Amaziah apparently did what was right or holy, and outwardly appeared to have an upright heart: but ſtill it appeared from his conduct that he had not an upright heart, and apparently did nothing which was right."

Phil. Moſt willingly I grant it all; for when he conducted like a good man one day, he then appeared to be one: but when he conducted like a wicked man the next, he did not; the appearance therefore on the third day, was, that he had done no duty at all, and conſequently was a hypocrite.

Tol.

Tol. "What absurdity and contradiction is here!!!"

Phil. I see it, Sir; but who is the author of it, the hypocrite or his advocate? The absurdity must either be fathered upon Amaziah, or his advocate: for I know it is not absurd to say that he was a hypocrite, when at the one time, agreeably to the command of God, to cleanse the throne of Judah of the blood of his father, he executed the murderers, and then, as soon as opportunity presented, bowed his knee and burned incense to the dumb idols of the heathen, contrary to God's command. This is the character of Amaziah, and this is the character of the hypocrite. And you will please to remember, there is no way for a hypocrite to discover himself, but to act publicly these different parts upon the stage of human life: and to say that a man does that which is right, but not with a christian heart, is precisely the same thing as to say he is a hypocrite.

Tol. But "This character of Amaziah, which we have in the text, was drawn after his death, at a time when his whole conduct appeared in a ful and clear view, when all the signs he had ever given of a good heart and a bad one, were at once before the eyes of the inspired historian."

Phil. And for this reason the inspired penman informs us, that he did right, but not with a good heart. For inspiration has written his character just

as he formed it by his own actions. The character is impartially drawn like David's. He therefore who reads it, is under the ſame advantages to judge of it as tho' he had ſeen his life. But, thoſe who ſaw him act theſe oppoſite parts, hinted above, with ſuch zeal, muſt have concluded with the text that he had a double mind, and ſo muſt we who read his life. If he had repented of his idolatry, as David did of his murder, and it had been recorded, we could not conclude againſt his religion, when he executed the Regicides. What you therefore ſay relative to his character's being given after his death, does not alter the caſe. For his hiſtory was taken from the divine records, and they were formed from his ſucceſſive actions. When therefore the Bible ſays he did right, we ſee that part of his life which then had that appearance; and when it ſays he did not, we ſee the other part, and both theſe, without a penitent part, form the hypocrite.

Tol. "For the Holy Ghoſt in ſuch circumſtances, and upon ſuch a view of things, to give this character of him, that he did that which was right, but not with a perfect heart, according to the notion we are impleading, is as much as to ſay he appears from a view of his whole behaviour to have had a perfect heart, and yet it appears from the ſame view he had not."

Phil. No, Sir, aſking your pardon: not from a view of the *whole* of his behaviour; but from a view of

of *part* of his behaviour, it appears that he had a perfect heart, and from the *other part* that he had not: and hence, on the WHOLE, it appears he was a hypocrite. For the two contradictory parts of his life, on the whole, make him the hypocrite. You uſe the univerſal term in a wrong place, where but half of it is neceſſary.

Tol. This conſequence will then follow, "He appears, on the whole, to have done what was good and holy, and yet he appears to have had no inward ſincerity, and therefore to have done nothing which was holy."

Phil. No, Sir, you miſapply the term *whole* again. For part of his life was ſpent before the altar of God, and part of it before the altar of Satan: and theſe two parts make a whole, which forms the character of a hypocrite. You muſt not therefore cut his life in two, and then apply the term *whole* to each part of it: for this faſtens no abſurdity upon me, to ſay the leaſt.———

Tol. But let me go on: "He appears to have been a true ſaint, and yet it was evident he was a hypocrite," upon your principles.

Phil. I agree with you, Sir, ſo it does. For the former part of his life was quite ſaintiſh enough, and the latter ſinful enough to make him a royal hypocrite, which is his true character. Hence the Bible ſays, he did that which was right in the ſight of the

Lord, but not with a perfect heart, or that he was a hypocrite, which was the thing to be proved.

Tol. "Thus this hypothesis makes the character given of this prince appear very strange, self-contradictory and senseless."

Phil. So it does, and so it ought to: for he was a hypocrite, who is a strange, self-contradictory and senseless character. And as a brother, I really advise you to make no further defence for THE HYPOCRITE: for he will be self-inconsistent as long as the bible says he did that which was right, but not with a perfect heart. Amaziah and Balaam were brothers, with this difference, that one obeyed the Lord with a very idolatrous, haughty heart, and the other with a very covetous heart; and whose exercises were the best I leave——————

ON the whole, when you *properly* remember the text is a contrast of all his good and bad actions in miniature, that the first part of it presents him at the altar of God, and the last at the altar of Satan, you will not cut his life in two, and treat his character as tho' he did not live the latter part of it; but you will see him on the upper part of the picture, bowing before the altar of God with great zeal, and on the lower part of the picture bowing with great zeal before the altar of the devil, and at this contrast you will look with displeasure, and give the worshipper of God and the devil no better name than I have.

FURTHER,

FURTHER, ſince the Bible has not informed us, and we cannot ſee any method, how God could have eſtabliſhed and maintained his own character as the righteous Governor of the world, before the ſcanty ſight of men, but to give and treat national and perſonal characters, according to their viſible conduct; it is eaſy to ſee why God ſaid Amaziah did right in his ſight, without ſuppoſing he did any part of his duty, as that we ſhould ſay ARNOLD did right, becauſe he appeared to be a friend to his country, when at the ſame time God ſaw him plotting its ruin. In ſhort, if we can give any reaſon why God told Abraham when he knew infinitely well the conduct of Sodom, and the heart of every one in it, that he would go down, and ſee whether things were according to report, we can tell why he has ſaid in the viſible hiſtory of Amaziah, that he did that which was right in his ſight, without concluding that he did any part of his duty. But, we know that God went down to Sodom to give viſible teſtimony of his rectitude in not deſtroying the righteous with the wicked. And I believe we may challenge an inſtance thro' the old diſpenſation, when God, as the Governor of that people, either gave or treated any characters, but according to the viſible appearance, rather than as the ſearcher of hearts. The heart is ſometimes ſpoken of in very flagrant inſtances, when it was fully expreſſed, but not however made the rule of public praiſe or blame, rewards and puniſhments any further, than mortal eyes could read it in external actions. The conſequence is then plain, that

that if visible evidence of good and bad characters, was the rule of God's visible treatment of them, that you have no right to conclude that Amaziah did any part of his duty, because God said he did right in his sight. For God would have said the same, if he had been, from the beginning of his reign to the end, the most conscious hypocrite, provided he had appeared a good man to others.*

I have done with the king: but since you think a sinner may be morally good, I hope you will now give your definition of moral goodness: for the evening spends.

Tol. "The precise notion of moral goodness is a conformity to that law, to which as moral agents we are subject."

Phil. But, can you give a better definition of holiness? For, what can holiness be but conformity to the moral law? For, the law to which we are subject as moral agents, and the moral law, is one and the same thing. But, the summary of the moral law you remember is this, Thou shall love God, and thy neighbour. For once then we are perfectly agreed: for there is no difference between moral goodness and

* *If Toletus has failed of proving that Amaziah did right in a moral view, he has also failed of proving, that Jehu did well in a moral view.—And whether Ahab's apparent humility was better than his pride, the day of judgment will determine.*

and holineſs. But, I queſtion whether you mean that the definition you have given ſhould ſtand. You may alter it if you pleaſe, for my buſineſs is to lay my courſe after you: and do as well as I can.

Tol. I will add this, that "Every act of the will which is in any reſpect conformable to this law, is in that reſpect morally good."

Phil. We are agreed ſtill: for if the law be moral, and there be an act of the will conformed to it, ſuch an act muſt be morally good and holy too: for, holineſs conſiſts in moral conformity to the law. But is this what you mean to communicate, that every act of the will, which is in any reſpect conformed to the law, is a holy act?

Tol. No, Sir, by no means, for "It may be ſo deficient in other regards, that it cannot be denominated holy."

Phil. But, this makes a jumble ſome how. For, holineſs you readily grant is a voluntary conformity to the law: and yet there is a voluntary conformity to the law which is not holineſs. It almoſt, or quite makes holineſs inconſiſtent with itſelf.

Tol. What I have ſaid is plain, for "Every act of the will which is in any reſpect conformable to the law, is in that reſpect morally good, tho' it may be ſo deficient in other regards, that it cannot be denominated holy."

Phil.

Phil. We will then try your phraſe, conformable in any reſpect, and ſee what we can make of it. And to aſcertain the thing eaſily, let me query: Is not prayer commanded? I need not anſwer it is. Is not a will to make a prayer commanded? This is alſo too plain to require an anſwer. Is not God pleaſed with prayer? Yes. How then can we account for God's ſaying to the Jews, When ye ſpread forth your hands I will hide my eyes, when ye make many prayers I will not hear? For, you cannot ſay their diſpoſitions to pray were not conformable to the command in any reſpect: for they were conformable in the external reſpect. Your diſtinction then between an act of the will which is conformed to the law, and conformable to the law in any reſpect will not avail in one reſpect at leaſt.

Tol. God looked with diſpleaſure on their prayers becauſe their hands were full of blood, there was no act of conformity to God about them.

Phil. Very true, Sir, and who has any acts of will which, *in any reſpect*, are conformed to the will of God, but the man who has a new heart? Since, therefore, it is not *any* act of the will which conſtitutes moral goodneſs, according to your notion of the matter, but an act of the will of a particular quality, I will carefully enquire how many kinds of will man poſſeſſes. And more than good, bad and indifferent, I muſt confeſs I have no knowledge of, either from my own experience, or the writings and declarations

rations of others. *Firſt*, I will attend to the indifferent claſs of human exerciſes. For the ſake of plainneſs let them be termed animal. Men are animal agents in a reſtricted ſenſe, as well as moral agents: and, as animal agents, they very much reſemble other animals which are deſtitute of immortal ſpirits. In man, as I have hinted before, there is an averſion from pain, and deſire of pleaſure, the other animals poſſeſs the ſame—man hungers and thirſts, ſo do they—man loves ſociety, ſo do the brutes—human nature loves its offſpring, ſo do beaſts and birds—men are capable of feeling for others in diſtreſs, ſo are other creatures, and more eſpecially for their own ſpecies. I might deſcend to natural gratitude and other reſemblances, if needful. But, it anſwers the preſent purpoſe to obſerve, that all thoſe exerciſes and feelings, which are as common to mere animal agents as to man, are not of a moral kind, and do not partake of the nature of virtue, or vice. For, no one will contend that mere animal exerciſes which do not in their own nature affect the rights of others one way or other, are of the moral kind. But tho' they are neither commanded nor forbidden in themſelves, by the moral law, yet we muſt remember, that the moral agent is under the greateſt obligations to improve them to the glory of the Creator, as he is every thing elſe which he poſſeſſes.

Secondly. The holy claſs of exerciſes is the next. But, holy exerciſes of heart are the property of the children of God, and not of ſinners, as we are both agreed.

Thirdly, The only remaining claſs is ſinful. For a fourth claſs of human exerciſes cannot be named. The Bible, common ſenſe and experience, are all ſtrangers to it: imagination only is acquainted with another claſs.

THE conſequence is then plain, that as your moral goodneſs cannot be found in holineſs, nor in ſin, nor in animal affection or exerciſe, that it cannot be found any where, 'till you point out ſome new thing under the ſun. 'Till therefore you deſcribe it, you cannot expect us to adopt it. That a natural man may make a profitable member of civil ſociety, and while under the influences of education, and the convictions and reſtraints of conſcience do a great deal of natural good, I do not deny. For God makes the earth help the woman, and the wrath of man to praiſe him: but natural good and moral good are very different things.

Tol. But "As there is a natural beauty in virtue, diſtinct from ſpiritual, holy beauty, and a correſpondent deformity in vice, ſo there is in the minds of ſinners in general a moral ſenſe or taſte, which immediately approves, and is pleaſed with the former, but views the latter with painful diſguſt, which approbation and diſguſt frequently excite anſwerable deſires to obtain or avoid their reſpective objects."

Phil. Thus we go from one thing to another, in queſt of moral goodneſs, which has no holineſs in it. I muſt therefore now enquire into the nature of the moral

moral ſenſe of the ſinner, which approves of the natural beauty of virtue. Now, Sir, pleaſe to remember, that the moral ſenſe you have upon the carpet, cannot be an exerciſe of heart. For, it has been abundantly proved, that the heart of the ſinner is nothing but poſitive ſinfulneſs: it has alſo been proved from the plaineſt ſcriptures, that the human heart is the only ſeat of moral exerciſes. By the moral ſenſe then, you muſt intend, that claſs of exerciſes of the moral agent which is purely intellectual. It muſt be an exerciſe of the head, and not the heart. The moral ſenſe is therefore either reaſon, judgment, conſcience or conviction, or an aſſemblage of all. I will adopt the term conſcience, becauſe it is ſcriptural. What then is the nature and office of conſcience? Her nature, as juſt obſerved, is intellectual, and not cordial. She reſides in the head, and not in the heart. As to her office it is manifold; for ſhe is Director, Inſpector, Reprover, Approver, Informant, Witneſs, Advocate and Judge, as the nature of human conduct requires; nor need I ſay ſhe ſometimes diveſts herſelf of the office of a Judge, and commences the moſt intolerable Tormentor to the ſoul. But here let us be careful, and not confound things. Whom does ſhe direct and inſpect, but the human heart? Whom does ſhe impeach? Whom does ſhe plead for and againſt? Whom does ſhe arraign before her ſolemn bar, try, acquit and condemn, but the moral agent? And whom but the man does ſhe torment and deſtroy? This is a view of the office of conſcience. Hence Paul, when before the bar of the Ro-

man Governor, makes his defence by a ſolemn appeal to his own conſcience. In another ſituation he calls conſcience to witneſs, that he could make the greateſt ſacrifice of himſelf for the ſalvation of his brethren. He alſo ſpeaks of the accuſation and acquittance of conſcience. And that ſhe at times aſſumes the office of the Judge, is evident from this paſſage. "He that is without ſin among you, let him firſt caſt a ſtone at her. And they which heard it being convicted by their own conſciences, went out one by one."——So when Joſeph's brethren ſtood before him, their long-abuſed conſcience aſſumed its office, and took the ſeat of judgment, and conſtrained them to ſay one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother—therefore is this diſtreſs come upon us. Since therefore it is ſo far from being true, that conſcience itſelf is a moral exerciſe, that it appears very evident ſhe acts in the place of God as Director, Approver and Judge, of moral exerciſes, it inviolably follows, that there is no moral goodneſs in it: and not only ſo, but that it is a violation of the word, if not the thing, to ſuppoſe it. I am now ready to query, further, whether moral goodneſs conſiſts in reaſon, judgment, or conviction? This you will not ſay, if you let theſe qualities of the mind do their office. For, reaſon, judgment and conviction, and not only ſo, but the cleareſt exerciſes of a condemning conſcience will go, as before obſerved, with the reprobate to the bar of God, and attend him into the ſtate of the damned, and will prove endleſs fires to his poor ſoul. And will you

ſtill plead for the moral goodneſs of hell? The diſcovery of the natural beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice, is as common to devils, and damned ſpirits, as to ſinners under the preſſing convictions of the law: and, if we attribute moral goodneſs to the latter, we muſt to the former. It becomes us therefore, to attend to things diſtinctly, leſt we confound moral exerciſes and intellectual exerciſes together.——And, if we only diſtinguiſh between head and heart, or intellects and affection, we ſhall not call thoſe exerciſes morally good, which are as common to reprobated ſpirits, as to others. For, tho' ſatan has a bad heart, he has a knowing head: he has a conſcience; and tho' it does not approve of the temper of his heart, yet it diſapproves of it, and will puniſh and torment him forever: and, as repeatedly obſerved, the laſhes of conſcience will make no inconſiderable part, of the puniſhment of the damned. Theſe conſciences which are here violated, will prove their laſting tormentors. Are they then morally good? If ſo, hell is full of moral goodneſs.

Tol. "There is a moral ſincerity in diſtinction from gracious——And I may add, in profeſſing or expreſſing, both in words and actions, ſome regard to God, his authority and commands, ariſing from a conviction of his majeſty and power, his right to govern his own creatures, and the equity and fitneſs of his requirements——ſuch profeſſions and exerciſes imply a real regard to God in ſome reſpect, and real deſires and endeavours to obey him, in oppoſi-

tion to meer pretence, and therefore are morally ſincere."——

Phil. Can a man be a hypocrite, if your ſentiments be right, provided he thinks he is doing his duty, let him be as bad as he may at heart? This ground however we have been over repeatedly. Let us then look for a period of the conference. And, as you preſent me with the theory of brother Catholicus, as well as your own, I will directly preſent you with a practical illuſtration from ancient hiſtory: For, theory without practice, is but theory ſtill, if common ſenſe cannot approve and adopt the practice. But, let me attend a moment. What tho' ſinners make profitable members of ſociety——Tho' they do many things, like the young man in the goſpel, which have a beautiful appearance to thoſe who do not ſee the heart——Tho' they read, hear and pray, like many in the parable of the ſower——Tho' they are as zealous in religion as Jehu——Tho' they have great knowledge——Tho' they give away all their goods to feed the poor, and their bodies to be burned, like martyrs——Tho' they repent like Judas, and feel all the tender emotions of Saul when his life was ſpared, where he would have ſacrificed a thouſand——Tho' they promiſe to amend in time of thought, like the ſpectators of Sinai's burning mount ——Tho' they long to die the death of the righteous, like Balaam——What ſhall we conclude? For, thus ſaith the Lord, there is no faithfulneſs in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedneſs, and they

they flatter with their tongue. I aſk again, tho' they are as ſerious as death, and as ſolemn as judgment, and acknowledge God with their bended knees in the duſt, and fill the air with earneſt cries for deliverance.——For thus ſaith the Holy Ghoſt, again and forever, "When he ſlew them, then they ſought him, and they returned and enquired early after God: and they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheleſs they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongues: for their heart was not right with him."——

THIS, my Friend, is the view which the Bible gives us of ſolemn, devout ſinners, and the nature of their exerciſes and performances. Thus they prayed, and thus they acknowledged God as their Rock and Redeemer—but they flattered him with their mouths, and lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right. They did that which was right in the ſight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.

Tol. Have you done?——————

Phil. I have done, Sir: and, if I have not taken a candid, and generous view of your doctrine, and arguments to ſupport it, I have fallen ſhort of my intention. If, I have not looked your reaſoning fully in the face, and given it proper weight, I muſt be excuſed for the inability. If I have taken the leaſt undue advantage of any thing which has paſſed in the converſation, I aſk your pardon: and, if I have de-

parted from the maxims which were mutually adopted, I aſk pardon of all. But, for openly calling in queſtion your logic and conſtruction of ſcripture, as far as you have improved them to ſupport moral exerciſes which are deſtitute of holineſs, I aſk pardon of none. For, I ſincerely believe that God requires nothing of the ſinner which he can do, and be loſt, and that he is not pleaſed with any action now, which will not be acceptable for Chriſt's ſake, at the Great Day.

THAT diſputants have frequently loſt ſight of their ſubject, and ſlid into a criminal train of perſonal reflections, cannot be denied; and whether I am not chargeable with following the example contrary to this morning's profeſſion, others will judge. I dare not ſay, I am faultleſs: This however is true, that if I have only attempted to give your perſonal reputation the leaſt unfriendly touch, that I have deeply wounded my own. But, I hope I can ſay with ſome ſhare of uprightneſs, "No friendſhip, no diſpute, is my maxim ſtill."

Tol. If you have preſerved the ſpirit of the maxim, no apology is neceſſary, and if you have not, none can be ſufficient.

Phil. So let it reſt. But, as we part, let me put this queſtion, on ſuppoſition you think it duty to reſume the controverſy, Whether we can attend to it in a more friendly, advantageous method, than by an

an exchange of monthly letters? For, tho' you declined the propoſal, which led me into this conference, I ſtill think the beſt method we can adopt, to get and communicate light, is to exchange a few letters upon the ſubject in debate, and give others an opportunity to read them together. And, as I have uſed ſome degree of freedom in the converſation with the ſermon of brother Catholicus, I am not averſe from his conſidering the propoſal as made to him alſo: for we cannot be at too much pains to preſent the truth in the moſt advantageous light.

Tol. But, did you not promiſe us an illuſtration from ancient hiſtory?

Phil. Yes, Sir, I did.——

Tol. Pleaſe to proceed: for I hope it will crown the conference with a grateful impreſſion.

Phil. A number of centuries paſt, there reigned a celebrated Prince in the Eaſt, whoſe adminiſtrations wore every mark of perfection. He treated his obedient ſubjects as children, and they honored him as the moſt kind and indulgent parent. Tho' naturally calculated for ſocial happineſs in the moſt intimate connexions, yet for a number of years he preferred a ſingle to a married life. But, concluding that it would add luſtre to his crown, ſweeten his enjoyments, and promote the intereſt of his kingdom, to enter into wedlock, he reſolved to marry the firſt ſuitable character which would accept of his offer.

offer. The Miſtreſſes of fortune did not glance their emulous eyes at the matchleſs dignity of his character, without his notice: but, like a Prince of conſummate honor, he treated them all with proper regard and friendly neglect. The fading beauty of the world made no impreſſion upon his heart, becauſe he was wholly intent upon the unfading glory of the Divine Kingdom. Contrary to the pride and ambition of other Princes, he was willing to wait upon poverty itſelf, to obtain a bride of a meek and humble character. At length he ſaw her and loved her: for heaven ordained it ſo. But, to prove the ſincerity of his affection, ſhe was in captivity. This humiliating circumſtance, however, inſtead of abating, rather heightened his laudable deſire, and led him to deviſe a method of ranſom. The method was wiſely adopted and nobly executed, tho' at greater expence than can eaſily be conceived. As ſoon as ſhe was liberated from her captive confinement, he gave her the moſt generous opportunity to be acquainted with his character. His ſuperior wiſdom, and unrivalled dignity, were the leaſt ſhe could diſcover: and to entertain the deepeſt gratitude for his ſingular attention and friendſhip, was the loweſt profeſſion ſhe could make. But, while ſhe acknowledged her obligations; to render them as eaſy and grateful as poſſible, he frequently informed her, the pleaſure he enjoyed in effecting her deliverance, was greater to him than the advantage of it could be to her. Upon a ſuitable acquaintance, as his increaſing love waited with pleaſing impatience to compleat her happineſs,

by

by making her the joint partaker of the intereſt of his crown and enjoyments, he made her the offer of marriage. The propoſal was too generous not to be truly affecting. Some of the tender emotions were excited. He ſaw the grateful confuſion of her face; and deſired her to treat the matter without the common reſerve. She modeſtly replied, I have no objection except that of my own unworthineſs. But, this to him was rather a motive: and under all the honors of royal eſpouſals ſhe became his bride. She was the wife of his youth, and commanded his firſt and beſt affections: and every circumſtance relative to their marriage was fraught with the richeſt proſpect of mutual and laſting delight.

But how can I give the hiſtory of this royal pair any further? Nature itſelf will bluſh, and every generous feeling will kindle up to a flame to revenge the wrong. For the ſolemn covenant ſhe made to be his pure and ſpotleſs bride, never reached her heart: She therefore haſtened an opportunity to proſtitute herſelf, not only to the vileſt of his ſubjects, but to the dregs of the human race. The worthy king felt the unequalled injury of his bed with a bleeding heart. The wound was too deep to be healed, by any application ſhort of her real repentance. To think of expoſing her guilt and diſſolving his connections was painful; he therefore employed all the motives of bleeding friendſhip, to reform and reclaim her. But, ſhe heard his melting reproofs with great diſobedience and contempt; and not only ſo, but gave herſelf up

to

to the guidance of impure desires and affections, to such a degree, that she presently stripped off the Jewels and ornaments, with which he had hidden her poverty and adorned her person, to increase the number of her lovers. Upon this evidence of her ripening guilt, he sent an officer to inform her, that nothing remained but the most shameful death, if she would not return immediately and humble herself before him, and ask his pardon for the nameless abuse she had committed against his bed. She heard the threatning, but was so lost in the gratification of lust, that she was incapable of perceiving the danger to which she stood exposed: and told the officer, that she loved strangers, and after them she would go. But, no sooner was this hardened declaration made, than she was arrested, and condemned to die according to the threatning.

When the blushing day of execution arrived, her dormant fears were put in motion, and fully expressed. The king of terrors appeared in a new and terrible form. There appeared no way to look for relief but to apply to the Prince; and this she rather feared, in consequence of the shameless abuse for which she was condemned. But, conscience told her he was the most propitious, and her fears compelled her to ask liberty, to address him upon the subject of her hastening death. It was no sooner asked, than granted; she therefore immediately flew into his presence, and threw herself prostrate at his feet, and in the utmost confusion and distress, implored his protection.

He

He ſaw her humble poſture, he heared her doleful cries, and wept over her as Chriſt did over Jeruſalem, when the Roman eagle was about to light upon her devoted walls: but, concealed his tears, and aſked her whether ſhe was willing to forſake, and confeſs her ſhame, and return to the duties of a chaſte and obedient wife? The Prince graciouſly informed her, that he was ready to forgive her, whenever ſhe was ready to be forgiven: but as ſhe preſented her thanks, before any appearance of repentance, he told her, that pardon could not be obtained at ſo cheap a rate, becauſe it followed, and never preceded repentance and confeſſion.

As conſcience began to aſſume its office, ſhe replied, after a little diſtreſſing thought, I am willing to do every thing in my power, but how can I repent while I feel an averſion from you, and a delight in ſtrangers? I love your aſſiſtance in time of difficulty, for I have experienced it before, but your company and character I cannot eſteem. And what ſhall I do: for even now under the raiſed ſtroke of death I cannot poſſibly wean my wicked heart from luſt. Who, Sir, can alter the heart but God who made it? I pray you therefore to adopt ſome method, by which you can grant me preſent relief at leaſt. He heard her with the deepeſt indignation of ſoul; and told her, ſhe never appeared to him in a more hateful point of light. You are, ſaid he, an adultereſs, a ſhameful adultereſs ſtill, and I loath your requeſt; for, you ſlight and deſpiſe the love of a

tender

tender husband, who has done every thing to redeem you, and prefer the communion of strangers. She interrupted him, and said, You injure me greatly, Sir, you injure me; for tho' I have a heart of natural lust, which I cannot possibly overcome any more than I can make a new world, I am not at present, acting in the character of an adulteress. I am not gratifying the principles of lust. They are now under restraint: The flame of criminal desire is now pent up and confined. It is not like a harlot to fear and tremble and pray in this serious, solemn manner. That I have acted the open part of an adulteress, I do not deny, but I am so far from the indulgence of a lustful heart at present, that the influence of lust is suspended. And I wish to God to be delivered from its reigning power. Let a poor sorrowful creature plead a moment. Harlots are wicked we know, but "*The* wicked do not always act in character as such. Depraved as they are, it is not the evil principle in them which prompts them to action in every case. It is not that which accounts for all their prayers, or determines the nature and quality of them. Is there nothing beside wicked principle in them? Is natural conscience wicked principle? Is the natural principle of self-preservation evil principle? They have these to mention no more: and it is not for nothing, that the God of nature has implanted *them*." * These with submission are the principles which have the governing influence of my present conduct. And do I act like a harlot? But, give me leave, as hateful as I appear, to put this question

queſtion: "Whether, if a perſon does not act from the higheſt principle, it is a ſin for him, to be actuated by any other with which the Creator has endowed him?" * I do not deny, but I have an habitual averſion from your bed: but, do I now expreſs it? For, it is very evident "A perſon may have habitual enmity to another in a high degree, and yet not act it out in every thing towards him. * The King replied, I cannot bear the voice and pleas of a whoriſh woman any longer: for you render yourſelf more and more hateful to my ſight. She reſumed her natural plea, and ſaid, to what extremity am I driven! I do not aſk you to liſten to the voice of a harlot, but, "The queſtion is this, whether the voice of nature ſhall be ſuppreſſed? It is but the voice of nature, it is true; the voice of natural diſtreſs." * And ſhall it not be heard, when a remedy from natural evil is ſo needful? I have acted like a depraved creature, but I do not at preſent: For, depraved nature left to itſelf would never put on this humble appearance, and utter theſe earneſt cries for deliverance. The Prince could hear no longer, and ſaid, you appear no better than ſatan did when he prayed not to be tormented before the time: if, his prayer was worthy of being heard, ſo is your's. For, as it was his fear of deſerved puniſhment which made him pray ſo earneſtly, ſo, it is your fear of death which makes you pray at preſent. Your eyes and heart are full of

 adultery,

* *Excellent ſpeech becometh not a fool: But do not theſe ſpeeches become the Queen?*

adultery, and all your desire at heart is to be saved from punishment, and live in sin.

Upon the arrival of the officer, and seeing the King's inflexible determination to grant her no respite from sudden execution, without the deepest repentance of heart, her distress became intolerable: she therefore cried with the most piercing voice; O that the ears of majesty were open to my cry, for it is not the cry of a harlot; but the distressed voice of nature itself. It is the voice of a poor criminal, going not only to the place of execution, but immediately from that into hell: and what shall I do? What can I do? I cannot alter my heart; for my heart, like your's, is in the hand of the Lord. If you cannot grant me a reprieve, give me a respite, and if you cannot give me a day, for mercy's sake give me an hour. Perhaps I shall, I hope I shall repent and return to my duty; but I cannot alter my heart.. O remember how you have loved me, and what you have done to redeem me; and help me at this dying moment. I have no where else to go for relief: my life is wholly suspended upon your sovereign pleasure. If I could repent I would: but since I cannot plead repentance and hearty reformation as the grounds of some relief, shall the cries, the doleful cries of nature be rejected——Will my Lord and King hear this praying voice grow faint in death, and see me expire and grant no relief? O help me, help me; for there is no other help to implore.

THE *King* of KINGS heard her, but as his patience was worn out with her abomination, it kindled up into burning wrath, and he ſaid: "Hear O heavens; and give ear O earth—For, I have redeemed thee. I ſware unto thee, and entered into covenant with thee, and thou becameſt mine. I clothed thee, I covered thee with ſilk, I decked thee alſo with ornaments: and thou giveſt thy gifts to all thy lovers, and hireſt them that they may come in to thee. Wherefore O harlot hear the word of the Lord. I will judge thee as women that break wedlock are judged, and I will give thee blood and fury. I will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh; when fear cometh as deſolation, and deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind.

He then turned to the waiting officer, and ſaid, Her ſins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her, and double unto her double according to her works. She ſhall be utterly burned with fire. For ſtrong is the Lord God who judged her.

Tol. The ſtory is ſolemn and affecting: but, what is the application?

Phil. It is eaſy, and not remote. For, as the prayer of the impenitent harlot was diſpleaſing to the noble Prince, who waited to forgive her, ſo the faithleſs prayer of the impenitent ſinner who exactly reſembles her, is diſpleaſing and abominable to the Prince of Peace. "For without faith, it is impoſſible to pleaſe him."

Let us then keep in mind theſe ſolemn truths, that the ſpirit of the Lord will not always ſtrive with ſinners——That they are condemned already——and, that they will ſoon be put beyond the reach of mercy——Let us not direct them to ſit ſtill, and do nothing: and let us not direct them to do that which they may perform, and yet be loſt, leſt their blood be required at our hands. But, let us remember we are dying men, and that they are dying ſinners, and as we know the terrors of the Lord, let us perſuade, let us direct, let us compel them to repent immediately, and uſe all the common and ſpecial means of grace to the glory of God, as he has commanded. For, behold now is the accepted time. Paſt time is gone, and future time we can none of us claim; the preſent time therefore may not be ſpent in any thing which leaves the ſoul in a Chriſtleſs ſtate.

Tol. I wiſh you, and the company, a very good night.——————

Phil. We wiſh you the ſame, and the conſtant preſence of God.——————

As Toletus withdrew, the company diſperſed, except Philalethes and Amartolos, a young perſon under ſome ſerious impreſſions of mind. Amartolos it ſeems felt the weight of new difficulties, in conſequence of ſeveral things which Philalethes dropped reſpecting directions to ſinners, which prepared the way for the following private Conference.

A PRIVATE

CONFERENCE

BETWEEN

PHILALETHES & AMARTOLOS.

BRITISH MUSEUM 5 NO 95

A PRIVATE CONFERENCE, &c.

Amartolos. IF time will permit, and you are diſpoſed to converſe a little while in private, with leave, I will open the exerciſes of my mind reſpecting eternal things.

Phil. I am happy in an oportunity to attend, Sir, and hope you will uſe freedom: for, the ſubject you propoſe is the moſt important.

Amart. I need not ſay, as you are acquainted with my life and converſation, that I am in a Chriſtleſs ſtate, and conſequently expoſed to the wrath and curſe of God.

Phil. Whether you are in an unrenewed ſtate, God knows, who ſees the heart. But, if you are a child of wrath, your ſituation is truly dangerous. For, the ſalvation of the ſoul is precious, and life is ſhort and very uncertain.

Amart. I have no reaſon to conclude, that I ever experienced a ſaving change.

Phil.

Phil. If this be your judgment, that you are in the gall of bitterneſs and in the bond of iniquity, you live, I ſuppoſe, a very unhappy life.——

Amart. Yes, Sir, I do a very unhappy life indeed: and for ſeveral weeks together I have been ſo preſſed down with a view of my danger, that I have ſcarcely attended to the common concerns of life.

Phil. I am ſorry to ſee any one of my fellow creatures in diſtreſs, ſeparately conſidered. But, it gives me pleaſure to find, that the ſpirit of God has not done ſtriving with ſinners. For, tho' conviction is by no means a certain ſign of converſion, and thouſands have probably gone to their own place long ago, in conſequence of reſiſting the ſtrivings of the ſpirit, yet it is more probable that ſinners under conviction will be ſaved than others. The thoughtleſs ſinner ſeems to wear the very marks of deſtruction, upon his forehead: there is little or no probability of his ſalvation. Since therefore the children of God can generally teſtify, that they were the ſubjects of conviction previous to converſion, the conviction of ſinners is a hopeful, deſirable ſight.

And, as hinted in the courſe of converſation with Toletus, I heartily wiſh we might ſee great multitudes of convinced, diſtreſſed ſinners. It would afford a lovely proſpect of the conviction of a number at leaſt: and the children of God cannot be too careful

careful in the uſe of means with ſinners, to excite and cheriſh their convictions, that there may be ſome probability of their converſion. For, as thunder and lightning generally indicate a ſhower of rain, ſo, the attention and conviction of ſinners generally precede a ſhower of divine grace. And, if the law does not dart its forked lightning into the ſinner's mind, and thunder deſtruction in his ears, in conſequence of impenitence and unbelief, there is little or no probability of his ſalvation.

Amart. But, I thought you endeavoured to prove, while converſing with Toletus, that God does not require any thing of the ſinner, before repentance: but, now you ſay it is the uſual method of Providence, that conviction ſhould precede converſion. Are theſe things conſiſtent? You then wounded my hopes: but this is healing and encouraging.

Phil. What is healing and encouraging?

Amart. That conviction in the courſe of Providence is previous to converſion.

Phil. If this gives any particular eaſe of mind, I muſt freely tell you, that it is a ſign you have not much conviction, if any at all, and that your ſituation is the moſt dangerous. Do you think there is ground of conſolation to the ſinner, becauſe God is ſtriving with him, while he reſiſts the ſtrivings of the

the ſpirit with all his heart? May the ſtubborn child think he is in a good way, while he is determined at heart not to confeſs his fault? No, Sir, by no means: he is in a very bad way: for, it is a wonder if the father does not caſt him off, and not attempt his reformation any longer.———Thus, when the ſpirit of God ſtrives with the ſinner, and ſhews him his danger, and he gains conviction, that he is juſtly expoſed to eternal wrath, if he reſiſts the ſpirit, and will not repent, it is a great wonder if God does not give him up to blindneſs of mind, and ſeal his deſtruction beyond any poſſibility of eſcape. It is not the ſinner under real conviction who thinks he is in a good way: for he ſees his danger in conſequence of fighting againſt the ſtrivings of the ſpirit: but it is the ſtupid ſinner who is deſtitute of convictions. To ſee danger, creates diſtreſs: but not to ſee it, gives eaſe. The ſinner therefore who ſees by the eye of conviction, that his foot is juſt ready to ſlide, and that he is held up by the hand of an angry God whoſe ſpirit does not always ſtrive with man, is incapable of comfort and conſolation.—He ſees nothing but danger, and feels nothing but diſtreſs. I muſt therefore repeat it again, that if you feel eaſy from this conſideration, that conviction generally precedes converſion, it is an evidence that you are ripening faſt for deſtruction. For, if you were under proper conviction, you could no more reſt in this ſituation than you could lie down at midnight and ſleep under a flaming roof. Your ſtate is therefore not only critical but exceedingly dangerous. You think you have

ſomething

ſomething to do before you repent, becauſe God ſtrives with you to repent: but, as the end of God's ſtriving with you is to effect your repentance, you will do nothing, but oppoſe and reſiſt the ſpirit 'till you repent and do your firſt work. You may not conclude becauſe God does not ſpeedily execute the purpoſes of his wrath, but patiently affords you a ſpace for repentance, that he gives you leave to put it off to a more convenient ſeaſon; for the direction of God, and not his patience, is the only rule of duty. A more convenient ſeaſon for repentance will never come, and you have no right to expect it any more than Felix had who never ſaw it. If God ſhould direct ſinners to uſe means in an impenitent ſtate, it would be their duty to uſe them while impenitent, 'till further orders: but ſince he has not given any ſuch direction, we muſt conclude, that it is the ſinner's duty to repent immediately, and not reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt any longer. For, the impenitent uſe of of means is as really oppoſed to repentance, as impenitence itſelf, and will delay and put off repentance as long. The impenitent uſe of means is therefore not a duty, becauſe it is oppoſed to repentance.

Amart. What then ſhall I do? For I cannot repent. Shall I ſit ſtill and do nothing, or ſhall I do as well as I can while impenitent? Which is the leaſt evil, to uſe means as an impenitent, or not at all?

Phil. Let me reſolve the queſtion by putting another: What ſhall an idle diſobedient child do, who has

has no heart to obey his father, and cannot poſſibly do it, when he directs him to go to ſchool like a good boy, and learn his book? Is it his duty to go to ſchool in a pouting, ſurly manner, or to ſtay at home contrary to his father's command, and play?

Amart. It is not his duty to do either; but to obey his father, and to go to ſchool like a good boy.

Phil. You have anſwered juſtly: neither is it the duty of the ſinner to ſit ſtill and do nothing, nor to attend to means in an impenitent faithleſs temper, but to repent and do other things as directed.

Amart. You cut me off again: But, has the Bible no directions for ſinners?

Phil. Yes, Sir, the Bible has as many directions for ſinners as for chriſtians, becauſe they have as much to do. God calls upon men every where to repent and pray, and holds up all the motives of the law, and goſpel, of time and eternity, things mortal and immortal, to induce them to comply. There are as many directions to be given to ſinners as to ſaints: and as ſaints are bound to obey them in love, ſo are ſinners: and both are inexcuſable and guilty for diſobedience.

Amart. But chriſtians have a new nature, and ſinners have not: does not the Bible therefore direct ſinners to ſeek, that they may find?

Phil. Yes, Sir, it does: but, not to ſeek with an impenitent temper: for God has not promiſed that impenitent ſeekers ſhall find. For without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe him. As obſerved before, we are all called upon to ſeek and aſk: but with what temper? The Bible preſents an anſwer. "If any man lack wiſdom let him aſk of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it ſhall be given him. But let him aſk in faith."——In the next verſe, as you may ſee at your leiſure, the faithleſs man is told not to think he ſhall receive any thing of the Lord.

Amart. I do not ſee, but you have given the true ſenſe of the text: but, Chriſt directs us to ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate, which undoubtedly intends converſion.

Phil. No, Sir, the ſtrait gate is not converſion: for the gate is at the end of the way, and not the beginning. The gate opens into heaven, the new Jeruſalem, as the ſcripture uſes the metaphor. As the wide gate of deſtruction, is at the end of the ſinner's travels, who prefers the broad way; ſo the ſtrait gate of life, is at the end of the chriſtian's travels who prefers the narrow way: accordingly the ſpirit ſays, "Bleſſed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in thro' the gate into the city." As heaven and hell, as holineſs and ſin, as the narrow way, and broad way are oppoſites; ſo the ſtrait gate and wide

gate are oppoſites alſo; and as the wide gate opens into hell, at the end of a ſinful life, ſo the ſtrait gate opens into heaven, at the end of a holy life. This is all eaſy and natural; hence the chriſtian traveller, who is moving ſlowly on toward the beloved city, whoſe foundation is God, eternal in the heavens, is exhorted to lay aſide every weight, to gird up his loins, and run and ſtrive with all his might, to enter in at the ſtrait gate.

Amart. The ſenſe you give of the text is natural, if not juſt.

Phil. If it be agreeable to ſcripture, it muſt be juſt: and I rather think when you carefully conſider theſe things, that the gate of Jeruſalem is uſed in ſcripture to illuſtrate the entrance into heaven, and that the ſinner who is cordially averſe from a new nature, never ſtrives after it, you will adopt the expoſition.

Amart. Is it not the duty of ſinners to wait at wiſdom's gates, and watch at the poſts of her doors for inſtruction, as the impotent man waited at the pool for the moving of the water?

Phil. Yes, Sir; but as the ſinner does not deſire holy inſtruction for its own ſake, as the impotent man did natural ſtrength, the caſes are not parallel. The waiting poſture therefore of the impotent man,

who

who really desired what he waited for, illustrates the temper of the christian, and not the sinner. For the sinner hates the grace of God, and always receives it in vain.——He hears the word, but as it is not mixed with faith, it does not profit, any more than it did the fruitless hearers in the parable of the sower.——

Amart. What you say, is too true to be speedily rejected. But, does not Ezekiel's text, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them," prove, that it is the duty of sinners while impenitent to pray for new hearts?

Phil. No, Sir, it does not, and never can, 'till you prove that sinners do their duty in asking for what they do not desire: and also that there were no good people in the house of Israel, to pray for the rest. But, why do you suppose the new heart was the particular blessing promised in the text; is there reason for it?

Amart. It is mentioned in the chapter, and stands in connexion with others contained in the text, and is probably the principal thing intended.

Phil. In the 24th verse, God says he will deliver them from the heathen, and bring them into their own land.—In the 25th verse, he goes on to say, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you—A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.—At the 28th verse, their temporal pros-

perity is introduced and treated of in its ſeveral branches very diffuſely, down to the 37th, which is the verſe you have cited. Now, Sir, ſince the reſtoration of Iſrael in its happy connexions, is the bleſſing directly treated of without any interruption from the 33d verſe, to the end of the 38th, as all will grant, muſt we not conclude, that the reſtoration is the particular bleſſing which God then promiſed upon condition of Iſrael's praying for it? When God ſays, for this I will be enquired of in the 37th verſe, what does he mean? Is it the reſtoration ſpoken of in the 36th verſe, or is it the new heart ſpoken of in the 26th? Which of theſe bleſſings is the antecedent?

Amart. The laſt, I think, Sir, is the moſt natural. For, when it is ſaid, for this will I be enquired of, one would ſuppoſe the thing intended was the reſtoration directly under conſideration.

Phil. You could not have anſwered otherwiſe: for tho' the word *this* refers remotely to the former, it muſt have a *direct* reference to the latter. The reſtoration of Iſrael or the return of the captivity in its happy connexions, was then the bleſſing which God promiſed on condition of their prayer: and if we can now find what kind of prayer God promiſed to hear, the ſenſe of the text will remain no longer in the dark.

Amart. Very true, Sir, and it was probable ſuch kind of prayer as they were able to make in an impenitent ſtate.

Phil. No, Sir, it was not: for in the 29th of Jeremiah, "Thus ſaith the Lord, that after 70 years be accompliſhed at Babylon, I will viſit you and perform my good word toward you, in cauſing you to return to this place——Then ſhall ye call upon m and ye ſhall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye ſhall ſeek me, and find me when ye ſhall ſearch for me with all your heart. And, I will be found of you ſaith the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity, and will bring you again into the place whence I cauſed you to be carried away captive.—The condition of their return, or the nature of that prayer, which God promiſed to anſwer is alſo expreſſed thus, "If they turn and pray unto thee, ſaying, we have ſinned, we have done amiſs and have dealt wickedly: if they return to thee with all their heart, and with all their ſoul in the land of their captivity, and pray toward the houſe which I have built for thy name; then hear thou from the heavens their prayer, and their ſupplications, and maintain their cauſe, and forgive thy people which have ſinned againſt thee. *

Now, Sir, let me aſk you ſeriouſly, did ever impenitent ſinners in Babylon pray with all their hearts and ſouls, and comply with this holy condition?

Amart. No, Sir, it cannot be ſuppoſed.

* *Pleaſe to ſee the ſame in Lev. 26th.* 41, 42.—— *Deut.* 30*th.* 1, 2, 3.——

Phil. Is there any evidence, that God lowered down this condition to the level of faithleſs prayer?

Amart. No, Sir, I preſume not.

Phil. Is there any evidence that God put this covenant aſide, and made a new one upon eaſier terms?

Amart. No, Sir, there is not.

Phil. The conſequence is then plain, that the text does not apply to ſinners in Zion, but to the friends of Zion.

Amart. But were there any at that time?

Phil. If there were not, God could make them. But why ſhall we overlook Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the prieſts and levites ſpoken of in Ezra, whoſe ſpirit God had raiſed to go up to build the houſe of the Lord? Theſe were the houſe of Iſrael in the noble ſenſe: for they were the leaders of it: and thoſe ſolemn days of faſting and humiliation in reference to the reſtoration of the church, which we have an account of in Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, were not kept without praying breath—for according to the prediction, the houſe of Iſrael prayed, and God heard and anſwered. The fulfilment of the prophecy is its own expoſition.

Amart.

Amart. But, ſuppoſe we conclude, that the new heart was the principal bleſſing for which God ſaid he would be enquired of by them, as well as their reſtoration, what will be the conſequence?

Phil. The conſequence will be as before, for the covenant is the ſame, that the true children of God prayed for ſinners: for it is very inconſiſtent to ſay that ſinners ever fulfilled the condition of the covenant, and prayed with all the heart and ſoul for new hearts in an impenitent ſtate. For good men can do no more.

Amart. The expoſition you have given of the text deſerves notice. But what ſhall we think of the conduct of the Jews in the 34th of Jeremiah, who are ſaid to have done right in the ſight of the Lord in proclaiming liberty to their ſervants?

Phil. We muſt think, for aught I ſee, as the Prophet ſays in the next verſe: "But ye turned, and polluted my name, and cauſed every man his ſervant whom he had ſet at liberty to return and brought them into ſubjection.—Therefore thus ſaith the Lord, ye have not hearkened unto me in proclaiming liberty." The fact is this, there was the appearance of doing well, as in the caſe of Jehu and others, and the appearance only: for they ſoon made it evident that they were nothing better than hypocrites.

Amart.

Amart. Is not conſideration, which is often called the firſt ſtep to converſion, a duty?

Phil. If you mean impenitent conſideration, I ſay, no: for the thoughts of the wicked are ſin. But, if you mean ſuch conſideration as David's, which is the eſſence of repentance, I need not ſay, yes.

Amart. Do you ſuppoſe the publican and the returning prodigal were good men?

Phil. I ſee no reaſon to conclude they were not: for the former went away from his humble devotion *rather* juſtified; and the latter returned as a penitent, and was moſt readily met and gratefully received by his father.

Amart. What was the cauſe of Chriſt's loving the young man in the goſpel, if he had not done any part of his duty?

Phil. Chriſt loved him becauſe he had a precious ſoul, as God loved the world while his enemies.—Chriſt's heart was full of benevolence and pity toward him: but felt no complacency in his moral character, becauſe he evidently loved his riches more than he did the divine command. The very propoſal of duty made him ſad.

Amart. I ſhall mention but one text more to prove, that ſinners do their duty in ſome reſpects;

for it ſeems every one I have produced is capable of a different conſtruction without the leaſt violence.—The Apoſtle ſays, "Thou believeſt there is one God, thou doeſt well." And if inſpiration informs us in plain terms, that the ſinner does well, who ſhall ſay the contrary?

Phil. But, does not the Apoſtle ſay further, "The devils alſo believe and tremble? Now, Sir, does the Apoſtle mean to prove, that the devils do their duty, or does he compare the faith of ſinners to the faith of devils to expoſe it, becauſe there is no duty pertaining to it?

Amart. I do not ſee, but it muſt follow from his mode of expreſſion, that the faith of devils is as really a duty, as the faith of ſinners. But, this is too glaring to look at without confuſion. I muſt therefore conclude, that the faith of ſinners is compared to the faith of devils, purely to expoſe it. For, the faith of devils is but the faith of devils when all is done. In ſhort, I do not ſee but every text eſcapes me upon examination.

Phil. It is not ſtrange, Sir: for ſhadows are not ſubſtances, and they muſt vaniſh upon examination. The Bible was not inſpired to ſupport the duty of ſinners. For, it cannot be true, that God has offered mercy at the expence of the croſs, and yet commands the ſinner to do any thing leſs than accept of

of it. As nothing can be cheaper than a gift, ſo nothing can be eaſier, than to accept of it, and nothing leſs therefore can be required.

Amart. You wound my hopes ſtill, and give me no relief. But, what ſhall I do is the queſtion?

Phil. The anſwer is ready, repent and believe.—This is what infinite wiſdom ſays, and this muſt be right, and any thing ſhort of it muſt be wrong.

Amart. But, I cannot repent: it is not in my power.

Phil. Is the command unreaſonable? Is it unjuſt?

Amart. I dare not ſay it: for the command of God muſt be juſt.

Phil. Is it reaſonable then, for you to ſay, you cannot? If God ſhould command natural impoſſibilities, you might plead inability as an excuſe. But, as God's command is holy, juſt and good, you cannot plead inability, without adding ſin to ſin.

Amart. But, to allude to the ſimilitude uſed in the morning, I cannot repent any more than an infant can take up a rock, and carry it to the top of a mountain.

Phil.

Phil. Would it not be very unreaſonable for a parent to direct his child to carry a rock, which none can move but the Creator?

Amart. Yes, Sir, altogether ſo.———

Phil. And is God unreaſonable, or not?

Amart. I dare not ſay he is, and yet he commands what I cannot do.

Phil. But, where does the inability lie? Is it in an unwilling heart, or in the weakneſs of your mind and body? Do you ſincerely deſire to repent and love Chriſt, and cannot, or do you love ſin and hate Chriſt, and will not?

Amart. The core of the difficulty I ſuppoſe is this, that I love ſin and hate Chriſt, and conſequently am unwilling to repent.

Phil. This, Sir, is the fact no doubt. And hence Chriſt ſays, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life: and becauſe I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." But, this is a ſinful character. You have power to love ſin, but none to love holineſs.—You have power to reject Chriſt, but none to accept of him. God has made you a rational creature, he has given you a mind to contemplate the excellency of

of his perfections, as manifeſted in the works of creation, providence and grace; but you have no heart to love him. He has fed and cloathed you; he has loaded you with benefits and ſaved you from hell; but you cannot be thankful. He has ſent his ſon to offer ſalvation, and you deſpiſe it. Is not this then your true character? Are you not an enemy to your own ſoul? Are you not an enemy to God and Chriſt, and the whole univerſe? To adopt the ſtile of inſpiration, are you not a child of the devil, and an enemy of all righteouſneſs. Alas! Who can deſcribe the wickedneſs of your character. You have opportunity to be the obedient ſervant of the beſt of maſters—to be the child of the beſt of parents—to be the ſubject of the King of kings, and the diſciple and friend of Chriſt, and you will not; and not only ſo, but, if your power were equal to the enmity of your heart, you would remove God from the throne and deſtroy his nature. The language of your heart is like the fool's, No God——you do not chuſe any; you hate all that belongs to God: and nothing, but the reſtraints of Providence prevent your acting the public part of an incarnate devil. It is not becauſe you have no inclination; for you are fit for the company of the damned without any change, but death.--To become the inhabitant of heaven, you muſt be born again, but to be an inhabitant of hell, you need no alteration of temper. To cut the thread of life, is all that is neceſſary in order to your total deſtruction.

Amart. Is it poſſible, that this is my character? Have I ſo vile a heart?

Phil. To ſee the picture of your own heart, you have only to ſee what others have done when left to themſelves. The Jews, you remember, told Chriſt, if they had lived in the days of the Prophets, they would not have done like their fathers: but what did Chriſt tell them? And what did they do as ſoon as their advantages permitted? They attacked Chriſt's moral character, and not only ſo, but his life, and were loth to ſtop; they would have blotted out his name if poſſible. And are we better by nature than they? No, by no means. For, the hearts of men are naturally alike. And if you were not poſſeſſed of ſuch a temper, you could not refuſe to repent and believe.——

Amart. But I ſeem to love Chriſt, and deſire to repent.

Phil. No doubt, Sir: but do you love him to be ſaved from hell only, or do you love him becauſe he is God, and holds all creation in his hand as the potter does the clay?

Amart. I love him probably becauſe I hope he will ſave me from hell.

Phil. And would not the devil love Chriſt if he would ſave him from puniſhment?

Amart. Yes, Sir, no doubt he would: for he trembles at the thought of endleſs deſtruction: and

I ſuppoſe that I love him upon the ſame principle. I am fully convinced that my ſituation is the moſt dangerous. I am a ſinner, and have done nothing but ſin againſt God all my life. I have broken God's law and deſpiſed the ſalvation of the Goſpel, and deſerve nothing but a ſeparation from all good to all evil. The thought is dreadful: and there is but a ſtep between me and endleſs damnation, except my heart be changed: and yet I do not deſire to have it changed, but only to eſcape hell. If there were no hell I ſhould have no difficulty with ſin: but a hell there is, and it opens its wide mouth and waits to receive me. What then ſhall I do? Are there no directions which will help me?

Phil. The Bible is open, and the directions contained in it are fair. You are called upon to be humble, to repent and pray, and believe in Chriſt, that you may obtain mercy?

Amart. What is humility?

Phil. Humility is that temper of heart which diſpoſes a man to take his proper place.

Amart. Where is his proper place?

Phil. The duſt, Sir, is his only proper place: for he was taken from it and muſt return to it. And when he prefers this humble poſition at the feet of his maker, inſtead of expoſing himſelf like the guilty fool upon the dangerous pinnacle of pride, he ſhines like

like a diamond in the duſt, and appears to advantage. He happily reſembles the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who being in the form of God, made himſelf of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the croſs. The humble man feels his own littleneſs and nothingneſs, in compariſon of others. He eſteems others better than himſelf, and loves to ſerve them. As a particle of water is ſmall in compariſon of a generous ſtream, ſo the man of humility feels ſmall before the great family of his fellow creatures. He values his ſoul, but when he compares it to the great ſoul of mankind, he almoſt forgets and loſes ſight of it: for the governing principle of his heart is to eſtimate things according to their worth. When therefore he indulges a humble compariſon with his maker, he feels loſt in the infinite fulneſs and brightneſs of divine love, as a ray of light is loſt in the ſun, and a particle of water in the ocean. He feels leſs than nothing and vanity: and loves to lie deep in the duſt, where he can reflect the divine glory to the beſt advantage. He is willing to be a creature at the feet of his Creator. It inſpires him with the moſt grateful feelings of heart, that he has opportunity to be in the hand of God, as clay in the hand of the potter: and as he conſiders himſelf in this humble light, he ſubmits the nature and ſize of his future veſſel intirely to God. As his pride is loſt in the duſt, he looks up with pleaſure toward the throne of God, and rejoices with all the heart in the rectitude of the divine adminiſtrations. It fills

him with the moſt ſublime ſatisfaction, that the Lord reigns, and all the exaltation he aſpires after, cleaves to the duſt.

Amart. But, is the humble man willing to leave himſelf unreſervedly in the hand of God?

Phil. Yes, Sir; he is; for otherwiſe he does not poſſeſs that charity which ſeeketh not her own; without this temper, he is not willing to take his proper place, and feels ſelf-important. For, it is impoſſible, that a man can be humble and feel properly while he remains unwilling to truſt himſelf with God, before he knows the event.

Amart. But, was there ever a man who left himſelf at the diſpoſal of God, before he knew what God would do with him?

Phil. I ſuppoſe, there never was a man, who left himſelf at the ſovereign diſpoſal of God, without this temper: for thoſe who have not comfortable evidence that they have given body and ſoul away to God, without reſerve, do not yet know but they ſhall be loſt.

Amart. But, is it reaſonable, that a perſon ſhould caſt himſelf down at the feet of God without reſerve?

Phil. Is it reaſonable that a child, who has abuſed his father, ſhould come to him when he is called, before he knows whether he ſhall eſcape correction and be forgiven? May the child ſay, when called, I will come if you promiſe not to correct me, but before

you

you promiſe this I cannot. And, may the ſinner ſay, I will not give myſelf to God, before I know he will not deſtroy me?

Amart. But, does not every perſon know when he takes his place humbly before God, that he ſhall be ſaved?

Phil. As a perſon cannot know that he ſhall be ſaved 'till he knows that he is humble, and cannot know that he is humble 'till the firſt humble exerciſe exiſts, becauſe humility cannot be experienced ſooner, it is very evident that the beginning of humility puts the ſoul into the hand of God unconditionally, previous to any evidence that it will be ſaved.

Amart. I do not ſee but the ſentiment is juſt; but who can give himſelf thus into the hand of an abſolute Sovereign, without being entirely changed?

Phil. No one whatever: for, as you have frequently read, the carnal mind is enmity againſt God. The change from ſelfiſhneſs and pride, to benevolence and humility, is a great change: it is like life from the dead. But, that power which raiſed Chriſt from the dead, can eaſily lay the pride of the ſinner in the duſt, and give him a new and holy nature.

Amart. What is repentance?

Phil. To repent is to forſake ſin and love holineſs: and as the word is often uſed, it is to feel heartily ſorry that we have violated the divine commands.

The perſon therefore who becomes a penitent, is a real friend to the law of God. As he hated the law of God, while impenitent, love to the divine law introduces his repentance. And as he taſtes the lovelineſs of the law, he feels pained to the heart that he has violated it. The penitent never takes a proper review of his paſt conduct, but with deep ſorrow and contrition of ſoul. To think of having ſinned againſt God, who is love, immediately fills his mouth with theſe penitential expreſſions, "Father I have ſinned againſt heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon. I acknowledge my tranſgreſſion and my ſin is ever before me. Againſt thee, thee only have I ſinned and done evil in thy ſight."—I am vile, I am baſe; I repent and abhor myſelf in duſt and aſhes.—Repentance, like all other religious exerciſes belongs to the heart: and it is the exerciſe of a heart which bleeds in conſequence of having offended and diſhonored a pure and holy God. True repentance grows out of a heart of friendſhip to God, and not out of a heart of ſelfiſhneſs, as in the caſe of Judas: for, while ſelfiſh repentance is only the repeated violation of the law, true godly repentance will lead a man to ſubmit to the penalty, to accept of the puniſhment of his iniquities, and give glory to God.

Amart. What is faith?

Phil. The Bible, you remember, ſays it "is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things

things not ſeen:" and we cannot mend the definition. But, ſince we are told that with the heart man believeth, for the ſake of plainneſs and brevity, let me ſay that faith is loving the true character of Chriſt in all his offices. And if we can find a man who loves the character of Chriſt as he is revealed in the goſpel, we ſhall find one whoſe mind is convinced that Chriſt is God, that he is the only Saviour of ſinners, that he has atoned the law by his obedience and ſufferings, we ſhall find one who aſks God for all he needs in the name of Chriſt, who truſts in Chriſt entirely for pardon and juſtification; in one word, we ſhall find him who is united to Chriſt as the branch is united to the vine; and derives all his ſtrength from him: for Chriſt is the hope of the ſoul for time and eternity.

Amart. In what reſpect does Chriſt appear to be the moſt lovely?

Phil. He is altogether lovely, becauſe he is God: becauſe he is the brightneſs of the Father's glory and expreſs image of his perſon. Chriſt is lovely, becauſe he came to bear teſtimony to the truth. He has acted a moſt lovely part in vindicating the law and character of the Father. He has ſhewn the world by his obedience and ſufferings, that the law is holy, juſt and good——He has made it honorable for the Father to ſave thoſe for his ſake, who will love him with all the heart. In one word, Chriſt is excellent in conſequence of unfolding and diſplaying the perfections

fections of the divine nature in the great work of redemption: and no man will love him in the gospel sense, who does not deny himself and take up the cross as he has directed. Faith in Christ is therefore the exercise of self-denial. Self-denial is the great lesson which man is taught in the school of the father, which prepares him for Christ: and no man will come to the Son, without this lesson by heart.

Amart. What, Sir, is prayer?

Phil. It is needless to say it is not the exercise of the sinner, for the scripture says, "We know that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth." A better definition perhaps cannot be given than the Assembly's which children have by memory. For, the holy breath of the new creature, not only waits on God in the name of Christ to obtain the offered blessings of the gospel, but to present the most cordial confession of sin, and the deepest gratitude of heart for favors already received. The spirit of prayer is therefore the spirit of absolute dependence on the divine will. The man of prayer does not go to the throne of grace with a demand for what he needs, but he goes in the temper of a beggar. He asks fervently, but submissively: he makes no claim, he makes no demand but that of a real gospel beggar who does not feel the least disposition to complain were he absolutely denied. He knows he deserves nothing but the curse instead of the blessing, and therefore confesses

feſſes his vileneſs, lies low in the duſt and pleads with God for the ſake of his mercy. He prays for that which he does not deſerve, for any thing ſhort of deſtruction is leſs than his guilt——His prayer is therefore humble, penitent and full of union to Chriſt. He is united to Chriſt, and loves the intereſt of his kingdom. He loves the ſouls of men, and prays that the triumphs of the croſs might reach to the ends of the earth. He prays always: his prayer is not like the unſteady flaſh of ſtrange fire; but it is uniform and unremitting—he prays without fainting 'till his lateſt breath, in proportion to his love.

THESE, Sir, are the exerciſes you aſked me to deſcribe. The deſcription is very faint, I am ſenſible; and I ſincerely deſire you may be better inſtructed by your own experience. For chriſtian experience is the beſt Inſtructor.

Amart. I cannot ſay but you have given a juſt view of theſe exerciſes: but as they are all the exerciſes of the new creature, they are beyond my reach: and if you do not tell me how to repent and pray, my ſituation will be as before.

Phil. This I am not able to do, any more than tell you how to be hungry while you have no appetite to eat; and to be thirſty while you have no inclination to drink. If I ſet before you the goſpel entertainment, and deſcribe the nature of it, and aſk you to partake

partake with the friends of Chriſt, and improve the motives of the goſpel to induce you, it is all I can do. I cannot give you a taſte for goſpel food. The honey of the goſpel is good, and the honey-comb is pleaſant to the taſte, as all the gueſts can readily teſtify: and you will never ſay to the contrary after taſting. The ways of wiſdom are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace. Thoſe who have taſted and ſeen that the Lord is gracious, can never ſay leſs than the aſtoniſhed queen, that the one half was not told. Every thing except religion ſtrikes the eyes of its votaries in falſe colours, and promiſes much more enjoyment than it ever affords. Wealth is duſt, honor is vanity, and the higheſt pleaſures of the world are ripening pains, but the beauty of holineſs never fades. The good man only is happy. Proſperity does not raiſe him to a diſtracted height, nor adverſity ſink him to a painful depth: for the former teaches him gratitude and humility, and the latter patience and ſubmiſſion. He is happy not only under the ſmiles, but alſo under the frowns of Providence, in proportion to the enjoyment of the divine preſence. He has the promiſe of the life which now is, and that which is to come. For, to live is Chriſt, and to die great gain. Let me therefore in the view of that conſolation which attends every good man thro' the valley of the ſhadow of death into the realms of light and love, invite you to commence the friend of Chriſt.

Amart. You treat of heavenly things, but my ſoul is formed for woe! Yet tell me, Sir, how to eſcape!

Phil.

Phil. There is no eſcape for the impenitent. Your covenant with death ſhall be diſannulled, and your agreement with hell ſhall not ſtand. You may call upon the mountains to fall on you, and hide you from the preſence of God, and from the wrath of the Lamb; but all in vain.

Amart. I am ſenſible there is nothing before me but the furnace of the wrath of God, if I live and die in ſin.

Phil. You may add, there is nothing before you but that furnace ſeven times heated: but as awful as it is to drop into it now, it is better than to live long and die in ſin. And as ſhocking as it may appear, it is not improbable that you had better have gone from the womb to the boſom of deſpair, than to live any longer out of it. For, if the bleſſings of the goſpel and the curſes of the law, will not induce you to accept of Chriſt at preſent, what have you to expect from the continuation of life? Delays you have often been told, are dangerous; for one delay generally follows another in thick ſucceſſion, 'till the poor ſoul ſhoots the gulf, into the boundleſs ocean of God's melting wrath. An awakened conſcience is eaſily put to ſleep by the opiates of ſin—A few days, and you may be left to conclude that your heart is not ſo bad as it now appears—in a few more you may fondly flatter yourſelf, that there is ſome duty in performances deſtitute of love to God—you may ſhortly loſe your convictions and put darkneſs for light, and entertain the moſt contemptible

opinion

opinion of thoſe who tell you the truth. It is an eaſy thing for ſatan to get ſuch advantage of your judgment, as to make you believe, that your preſent conviction is nothing but deluſion and diſtraction——Your ears may ſoon be delighted with the ſound of ſmooth things, and prefer that inſtruction which naturally tends to ſilence conviction, and give the ſinner peace of mind in the midſt of danger. And I fear you will ſoon deſpiſe me for the freedom I have uſed in the conference. I wiſh it may be otherwiſe; for I love your ſoul; and pray that you may not reſiſt the ſtrivings of the ſpirit, and bar the door of your heart againſt a waiting Saviour.

Amart. O, Sir, I fear I have ſinned away the day of grace: and that it is too late to be ſaved.

Phil. As you have ſpent the flower of your life in the ſervice of ſin, you have reaſon to fear, that God will leave you to die in ſin: but, you are not in hell, you are ſtill within the reach of mercy. God may have mercy on you—there is a poſſibility of your ſalvation, but the next moment there may be none. Repent then immediately and come to Chriſt. Life and death, the bleſſing and the curſe are now preſented—heaven and hell are both opened to receive you, and all the inhabitants of both are waiting for the event of your DECISIVE CHOICE. * * * * * *

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